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HITHERTO:

A STORY OF YESTERDAYS.

BY

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HITHERTO.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT ANSTISS DOLBEARE REMEMBERS.

PROSE.

“TO-DAY” is a strange word. The point a life has got to, beyond which it must pierce the dark; behind which lies its own trail of light, born of its own movement, and showing — always *behind* — what it has truly meant and been.

The point the world has got to; where the blaze and the mist, the dazzle and confusion, are about it, that come of its greater rush, like the burst of a meteor heading across the skies.

In the blaze and mist of this “to-day,” things are seen false and distorted. People are in too great a hurry to tell of to-day; they ought to wait, in some things, till it has become yesterday.

I think it would be a good thing if some old woman were to tell a story,—if anybody, that is, young or old, could ever really tell a whole one. This is a thing which it is not possible truly to do. Stories in this world tell themselves by halves. There is always a silent side; many silent sides, perhaps; for lives run on together, overlap and interlace, and none can tell the life of another. That is one thing we find out as our to-days turn into yesterdays. Finding it out, we grow wiser concerning ourselves.

Therefore, and for other reasons, I believe it would be good

for some old woman, in such fashion as she could, to tell a story ; and that it is time it were done. Women, and men too, are so apt to cry out when the first stress of their life is upon them ; to give their raw pain and passion utterance. The world is full of such outpourings.

What can a girl of twenty know, that she should try to say what disappointment and endurance are, and what they come to ; that she should scribble of the deep, inner things, the soul-instincts and affinities, and the God-leading, and the ends ? Let her put her hand in His, and be led, for years and years ; and then let her, if she can and dare, look back upon those yesterdays and speak. I think the world would hear a riper and a different story. I think it would truly get a *novel* then.

I could not write a romance if I would. All my life long I have been living prose ; like the bourgeois gentilhomme, not knowing either what a grand thing that was.

I *meant* poetry. I longed and yearned for it. I tried to shape and measure the weary lines ; I could never make them stately, or pure musical. They were full of ands and buts, and long, dry sentences of common words.

I learned at last to read them patiently, and so God's meaning came, which glorified them.

If there were any glimpse of poetry in my early childhood, it all lay between the back door-step and the head of the Long Lane.

I used to get out there when the dishes were wiped up, or the seam was sewn ; perhaps in the still of a starlit evening when nobody knew where I was. I felt then, in the magnifying gloom, as if I had got away into the wide world. The world ? Among the worlds.

I used to wish they would just let me be *little* in peace. It was always, " You are too big a girl, Anstiss, for that ; " " You are too old not to know how to do this." It began before I was seven ; I used to think I must have been born too big and too old.

By " they " I mean, especially, Aunt Ildy. We always do, I think, instinctively individualize, somehow, that third person plural.

I never knew the whole of Aunt Ildy's name. I believe she was secretly ashamed of it herself. If she had not been, she would never have allowed herself to be called as she was, for she despised nicknames. She scrupulously gave me the hard whole of mine. It would have put a different complexion upon days and weeks, if once in a while in them, perhaps on a holiday afternoon, she would have said "Annie." When I was very bad, she called me "Anstiss Dol-beare!" I have wondered whether hers might have been Ildegonde, or Hildegard; or if people, indeed, ever got stories from the German as long ago as she was born. Her other name was appropriate enough. "Miss Chism" snapped you up in the very speaking. Somehow, you could not waste words with a woman of that name. She would not have let you, be assured. She never let anybody waste anything; time, or bread-crumbs, or feelings. I learned that young enough.

I remember a morning when I sat down on the back door-step with a damp dish-towel across my lap which I was to have spread upon a gooseberry bush. I sat listening to the grass-hoppers close by,—for it was still in the lane,—and now and then to a far-off sound of music, or of guns. Listening also, as I always was, mechanically and with a dread, for the sharp call that was sure to come after me.

"Anstiss!"

"O aunt!" I cried, remonstrating for once; "it's the Fourth of July!"

"Well, the world's got to keep turning round, if 'tis; or else it'll never be the fifth!"

That was all it seemed to amount to with her. That dishes should be washed after the beds were made; that dinner should be got after the house was swept; that the ironing should be done after the washing, and the mending after the ironing; that the fifth of July should come after the fourth; that things should just keep turning, whether anything turned *out* or not. I used to wish there would be a fire or an earthquake; anything that would joggle Aunt Ildy, and so shake up the dreary order of affairs that they might perchance settle back into relations a little different. I should have liked to

hear “puss in the corner!” cried somehow into my life, and to have seen what would have come of that.

What really was unusual in my lot,—what would have been at least pathetic with any other,—seemed to me the most prosaic and commonplace of all. I was an orphan, and so I lived with Uncle Royle, and Aunt Ildy “took charge” of me. To have had a father and a mother and a home,—that would have been the really poetical thing.

The Edgells lived over the way; across the lane, that is, the garden gates being opposite. Their house fronted on Middle Street, as ours on River Street. Main Street cut straight across both at the end of the lane, running up the hill from the waterside to the Old Meeting-house. Main Street and River Street had sidewalks and shops; Middle Street was shady and quiet, with nice dwellings and white-fenced front yards, and brown gravelled footways under the trees. Uncle Royle might have had a house on Middle Street if he had chosen, or even at South Side, across the river, where a few fine country seats had made the beginning of an aristocratic neighborhood; for he was well-to-do; but he chose to “keep his store,” and be still better-to-do; also he had been for years the New Oxford postmaster; so we lived on above and behind the shop, where Aunt Ildy and he had been brought up. Uncle Royle had been married, and his wife had died early. Perhaps “Miss Chism” (her name sounded so like scissors with its snapping dentals, and she seemed so constitutionally given to cutting short whatever was most comfortably going on about her, that from the time I first got hold of an old mythological chart and peopled my hungry fancy from it, I always associated her with Atropos) may partly have accounted to my mind for that.

I, too, was born here; for my mother came home, a widow, to have me, and to leave me, as soon as I was “too big a girl” to cry of nights, or to touch what I was told to let alone.

So it began with prose for me, inevitably; here in the most every-day part of an every-day inland town, neither country nor city, among people neither big nor little.

I was thinking of the Edgells. Why could not things have

been with me as with them? They had each other, beside all the rest, and that was a romance in itself. I had nothing and no one.

Margaret was pretty. When we played "Pretty Margaret," at school, she was always the one to be first "shut up in her tower;" that used to seem so grand and beautiful to me! And Julia,—what was it in her that so fascinated me? I could not give it a name then; I think now it was a certain freshness, spring, and aplomb in her whole nature that made everything charming which she did, whether it were jumping the rope, reciting a lesson, climbing a tree, singing a song, or even ciphering upon a slate.

I used to play with these girls in recess, and walk home with them after school. I used to "make-believe" that I was their third sister, and that I only had an errand in at "Miss Chism's" when we parted at our garden gates. I had to "pretend very hard" about many things.

Everything seemed to fall in easily for the Edgells; for me, everything took a good deal of helping out. In the first place, they had green morocco shoes. I thought I could have been good and pretty in green morocco shoes; but mine were always of common black calfskin. When they wore out and I begged for green ones, it was never worth while, or uncle wasn't going to the city, and my toes were out, and I couldn't wait. "One of these days," he said. Aunt Ildy "poh"-ed, and told me not to take notions.

Years before, when India-rubber shoes first came in use, I remember they had such nice ones, so prettily stamped on the toes, and run so evenly at the heels, and turning down so neatly and comfortably for the foot to slip in! Uncle bought me a pair when I asked him; but they were unfinished, plain, unequal things, with a thick and a thin side; if I tried to turn them they twisted upside-down. Nobody can guess the pain and the unsatisfaction and the disappointment I suffered over those India-rubber shoes. Why must things be always rough and awkward for me?

Then somebody gave the Edgells pretty basket-satchels. It was a pleasure to put one's books and luncheon in them.

Aunt Ildy said it was all nonsense ; children didn't have so many things in her day ; and I carried my calico one, in which the books and biscuits all tumbled down together into the lowest corner. I suppose, in her day, if she had only thought of it, the calico satchel was the last new thing. Silly trifles these were, of course, such as only a child could fret about ; but the beauty of life is something to a child also. It was in these things, then, that I longed for poetry and lived prose.

The Edgells used to sit at their chamber window ; this was cut low, with a broad sill, on a level with their laps ; and here they dressed their dolls. I had no chamber of my own, to begin with. I slept with Aunt Ildy ; for "where was the use of making up so many beds?" And our window-sills were up to my shoulders when I sat down, and only wide enough for a spool of cotton to stand on. I used to pull out a green trunk from under the bureau, and perch my chair on that and climb up, since I could not bring the window down ; and I would put my doll in the corner, and fold the shutter against her to hold her up, and sew my seam or hem my towel, and make believe it was a gown for her. Yes, the Edgells had everything real and easy. I had to pretend hard, and make things do.

Once, as if all were not enough, these girls had a cousin come to stay with them. I knew nothing of cousins, except in story-books. I had run off up the lane when the tea-things were put away, and met them at the head. I think Aunt Ildy winked in a grim way at this escape of mine in "blind-man's holiday" time, when she would not, by any means, have openly allowed it. This never occurred to me, however, when I might have taken my comfort in it. I was in my dark calico that I had worn all the week. One gown and two aprons, these were my seven days' allowance ; a change, and one for best ; if I spilled or tore, I went to bed. The Edgells had on light French prints,—those pretty, old-fashioned, white-grounded ones, with little sprays and dots and flowers running all over them, that somehow gave one a pleasant, delicate taste in the mouth, or a sense of fragrance, to see ; and they had their hair freshly brushed and fastened back with round springs bound with black velvet.

"You take one corner, Jue," said Margaret, "and I'll take the other, and we'll watch which way the stage will come."

Jue ran up to Middle and Main, and Margaret down to Main and River. For me, I stood at the lane-head, pretending it was some of my business also, and that I was watching — where no coach ever came. It was still and pleasant in the twilight, and there was nothing strange in our being out there so, bare-headed. People used to do differently then from now; and ours was not a bustling town. We were all neighbors.

The Copes, from South Side, went by in their open carriage. They nodded pleasantly to Julia and Margaret, and Allie Cope smiled at me. There had been a dancing-school at the hall the last winter, and Allie Cope used to dance with me sometimes. I had a drab-colored silk dress — it had been Aunt Ildy's once — with swan's down round the neck and sleeves, which I wore then. It made me look dull and sallow, for there was no contrast. It was nearly the shade of my hair. My eyes were dark blue, and had dark lashes, notwithstanding my pale locks ; but for these I should have been an ugly child ; as it was, I believed myself to be so, which answered every purpose. I never thought of its being partly the drab dress ; if I had, it would have made no difference ; becomingness did not enter into Aunt Ildy's articles of faith concerning dress. If a thing was good and tidy, it had to be becoming ; handsome was that handsome did. Calicoes that were *well covered*, and would wash ; silk that would wear and turn ; above all, things that were "in the house ;" these were not to be superseded or disputed.

Margaret and Julia did not watch steadily at their corners ; they skipped up and down the sidewalk, back and forth to me ; and by and by the stage came rumbling across Main Street, when we were none of us looking for it. Then we all ran down the lane, the shorter way, for it was no use running after. The Edgells flew in at their garden-gate, and it slammed back in my face. I lingered awhile in the faint hope that they and the cousin might come out ; but I heard the tinkle of china through the open window of the dining-parlor, and I knew they were giving her her tea ; so I remembered that I

had an errand in at Miss Chism's. In fact, Lucretia called out to me from the kitchen door:—

“ Yraunt's looking for ye, Anstiss! Be spry!”

I do not know which rasped roughest on my nerves, Aunt Ildy's direct and summary orders, or Lucretia's citation of “ Yraunt!”

Lucretia was a good soul too. Indeed, I ought not to let this early life of mine, now that I have learned better of its meanings and of what came after, return upon my thought with only hard and sordid seeming, through calling up the worst of it. It was not hard and sordid. It was only plain and very dull for me, since I was a child full of all keen possibilities for doing and enjoying, and for missing too.

We were quiet, staid, respectable people; the Chisms had always been that in New Oxford, and we lived in a comfortable, old-fashioned, industrious way. Royle Chism — it had been Royal Chisholm once, three or four generations ago, and we were of good stock in the old land — was looked up to by his townspeople, and had responsibilities laid upon him. He had been sent year after year to the General Court; he had been postmaster through ups and downs of party; his business of bookseller brought him into relation with all; the best people, and kept him *au fait* to the thought and progress of the day. Over his counter, all questions, political, religious and local, were discussed; it was this life, more than the money gain of it, that kept him to his trade.

As to social position, that thing of interminable and inextricable shades in New England, we came in close after the professionals. We could claim civility, at least, from all; our modest living was as good and as dignified as most; everybody did not then drive their barouches, and wear their jewels, and set out their plate, and visit fifteen miles about; there was still an old-school order to which such as we made no pretence, and against which we had no soreness. There were times and places when South Side and the town came together with a mutual courtesy; in the intervals, each had its own fashions and its own proper and distinctive considerations.

Solomon Edgell, our neighbor, was the leading lawyer of

the place. He had gone as senator from our district to the General Court, when Uncle Royle was a representative. They were good friends. I played at school and in the lane, as I have said, with his daughters. On rare and radiant afternoons I drank tea with them, and sat in the low window-seat and looked across in a sort of temporary triumph at an imaginary double of myself behind Aunt Ildy's shutter. The Edgells, in their turn, were sent for sometimes to South Side, and drank tea with the Copes.

Outside the town, all up and down the river, lay the beautiful farming region. Wagons drove into the streets and down to the water edge, twice and thrice a week, bringing country produce to the freight-boats that plied back and forth along this artery that took up and distributed the nourishment of a great country-side, of which a growing city, twenty-five miles away, was like the pulsing heart.

Every Saturday the wagon from Hathaway Farm came, and stopped on its way at our door. There was the weekly paper and perhaps a letter at the office,—these were to be inquired for; and there was our butter, which we always had of Mrs. Hathaway, and very likely some fruit or other kindly sending,—at least a message to Aunt Ildy. Mrs. Hathaway and she were old schoolmates and friends, in a one-sided sort of way, like sunshine and cliff. Kindly Mrs. Hathaway was content to do the shining; upon my aunt's side there was grim constancy and reflective capability. It always seems as if such persons did more in taking than the readier souls in giving. Possibly, measuring by strain of nature, it is counted so. Certainly, my aunt would accept kind offices from few.

It is plain I could not write that novel if I would. I have gone wandering into all these things from just remembering how Lucretia called me in that night out of the lane.

I saw the cousin afterward, many times. She came into my life as an influence. I know now what it was; she was picturesque. What I had seen a little of in Julia Edgell, I saw with tenfold largeness and lustre in her. Everything she wore had an effect; everything she did was in relief against the common background of others' unnoticed doings; things

happened to her as nobody else need expect they should happen to them. She always made me feel as if she were living in a story. If I had had any dramatic knowledge then, I should have said to myself that she was always upon the stage.

She was in mourning, to begin with ; that, to my quick imagination, set her apart in a sanctity and dignity at once ; if she smiled or spoke, it was as if out of some holy gloom she had condescended. The crape and the bombazine were a real majesty of sorrow, — a cloud into which no common experience could withdraw. The black merino shawl she loved to wear, contrasting about her white neck and beneath her rounded and imprinted chin, and falling in soft lines over her figure ; the long veil that made her face so fair and sweet, — these were, to my child's fancy, the very poetry of bereavement ; there seemed such a grandeur and solemn distinction in having lost a friend. She so young too. When old women wore black shawls and bonnets, there seemed nothing in that ; plenty such came into meeting ; there was probably nothing else left, and it was not worth while that they should buy anything new. The first Sunday after Augusta Hare came, my open-worked straw-bonnet, with the blue gauze ribbon (I hated ganze, it curled up so at the ends ; it couldn't float, even if there had ever been enough of it), seemed so tawdry and unmeaning, — so little-girlish, — when I put it on ! I had a secret wish in my heart that I was grown up, — not very old, — and that I had somebody belonging to me for whom it would be time to die. I thought of no one in particular. I do not think there was any wickedness in my wish. I thought only of the sublimity of death ; of the greatness of having had it come near one.

It was Augusta Hare's father who had died ; the pity of it I could not comprehend, only the poetic pathos, never having known what daughterhood truly was. I supposed it had been quite time, and it seemed to me no ill for him, but a crowning ; he became kingly to my thought, and a question about him trembled for weeks within me, and passed with a thrill from my lips at last, when she herself said something which drew it forth. All things came to me in this wise, with a depth

and a passion, according to their kind. Only my own life seemed so poor, — a mere living on, with no quick stirrings. It was bad for me; I should make all kinds of false estimates and mistakes; what I ought to have had was the beauty of childhood; the harm was in my being “too big a girl.”

It was Augusta’s father; and she had money of her own which he had left her; this made her so important and so talked about; houses and stores belonged to her, away in H——, where Mr. Edgell, being her guardian, had to go and transact business for her. She was to stay a little while here, and then go away to a boarding-school: another of the grand possibilities, which would never, I supposed, be possible to me.

Besides all this, she told Margaret and Julia, in the deepest confidence, that she was engaged. As soon as she had done school she would be married. If I had venerated her before, there is no verb to express what I did then. Grown-up people, particularly men who make the dictionaries, have no need, perhaps no recollection of a need, for such an utterance. Whether in the truest things or the most fantastic, there is nothing like the intensity of a child. Straight to the vital essence its imagination and its insight go; stopped by no contradictions, no practicalities.

I am remembering a foolishness; but I believed in something grand. I cannot help being reminded, even by a foolishness, of what the Master said concerning this seizing of greatness and glory, and how far might be its reach. “They only do always behold the very face,” — even of “your Father which is in heaven.”

In the midst of all this, I left off hemming towels, and with weariness and tears was learning to darn stockings.

I had two comforts over this work, grinding and distasteful; one was to get down with it sometimes into Lucretia’s room, in those clean, restful hours between the eating of dinner and the getting of tea; when the cat, and the tea-kettle, and the few flies that escaped Aunt Ildy’s and Lucretia’s vigilance and resisted their traps, had the kitchen to themselves, and Aunt Ildy had stepped out, or was taking

a nap, or gone to a sewing circle, or preparatory meeting, and Lucretia would let me in, and, perhaps, tell me a story.

Her room was off the kitchen, and down, by two steps; these, clean-and glossy with old-fashioned thick, dark yellow paint and almost daily soapsuds; from a little child I remember them, worn into hollows along the edges and knobby around the nail-heads. Sometimes I had used to "keep store" there, kneeling on the floor and setting out my goods upon them; selling things to Lucretia as she came to want them in her work; pepper-box, and salt-cellar, and nutmeg-grater, knife, spoon, and dipper. This was when she was not hurried, of course, and when she happened to be very good-natured; and she used to pay me with spotted beans. Afterward these were my counters in "Hull Gull;" I doing all the handling and counting, shutting my eyes and picking up haphazard, when it was my turn to guess how many, and keeping conscientiously the two piles, Lucretia's and my own, of which hers went when the game was over into the bean-box again, and mine into a little bag to "make change" in my next shop-keeping.

An old-fashioned chest of drawers, very much perfumed with musk and apples; a bedstead, glorious with a patchwork quilt in a sort of Hail-Columbia star pattern on a dark-blue ground, of which every bit was the text of some reminiscent narrative; a great oval, braided woollen mat which carpeted the middle of the painted floor; and a low, broad window, opening into the back garden, with morning-glories and scarlet beans growing to its top in summer, close by whose pleasantness stood a black and yellow wooden rocking-chair, with cushions upon the seat and across the head-piece covered with remarkable figured patch, upon which a summer-house and a red-tailed rooster, the one as big as the other, alternated,—these made up the external furnishings and charms of Lucretia's room. About these clung the perception of a kind of life peculiar to itself; not the high and picturesque, of which I had vague dreams and glimpses elsewhere and in other moods, but the plain and cosey, contented, commonplace and comfortable. Among them were suggestions of "away down East," where

this life had begun, almost in the very wilds ; of up-country frolics, huskings and quiltings, sleigh-rides and singing-schools ; of camp-meetings and “hirings out,” when Lucretia, like other girls of her circle, had entered for a winter or a summer into some neighbor household, making one with it, and “helping round ;” learning its life and plans and interests from an interior view ; being behind the scenes at a “weddin’,” or a funeral perhaps ; knowing all about how the match and the cake were made, or the “particklers” of the illness and the final frame of mind,—all this I heard in scraps from Lucretia, and idealized, in one way, as I did Helen Mar’s adventures, or the contemporary life of the Edgells, in another. It was not all misfortune, my being imaginative ; I got a great deal out of it.

My other comfort was in an accomplishment I had acquired with infinite pains, and could only exercise by stealth ; that of reading and darning at the same time, seizing two or three lines while I drew out my long thread, digesting and enjoying them while I inned and outed the next woof-line with my needle. In this fashion I embroidered banners, in fancy, with Helen in her Scottish castle. I trembled at her perils in the hands of Soulis or De Valence ; I knelt in the chapel beside Sir William Wallace, and I watched the triumphal entry into Sterling from the walls of Snawdoun. I had this, and the six volumes of Santo Sebastiano, and the seven of Sir Charles Grandison. Mrs. Hathaway lent me these last, one at a time. After all, I was not thoroughly unhappy. One might live through deeper basketfuls of darns than mine in company like theirs.

Aunt Ildy and Lucretia were immersed, one day, in the anxieties of preserving ; all the afternoon they were busy pasting papers over jars and tumblers, and setting in final array their ruby and amber pride on the long shelves of the great store-room. I was safe upstairs with my books and my long needle and my mending cotton ; it was only to work an hour more, at most, and I did not care for the lane to-day. Lady Selina had just torn her dress in the library door at which she had been listening, and Lord Delamore was recommending her to have it “fine-drawn ;” that was a pretty word

for tedious doings. I called my darnings to myself by that new name, and went on pricking up the balls of my fingers contentedly; as eager meanwhile as if I had not read it a dozen times before, to see how all should come out straight, the fine-drawing of deeceit be demolished, and Julia's integrity triumphantly made manifest.

All at oncee, from the garden door, a light step came up the stairs and around to my room. I had been too absorbed to notice from the window that any one had entered.

How lovely she was, as I turned and saw her then, in her clear, black muslin with tiniest dashes of white, and a knot of black ribbon in her hair! . In her hand, streaming down in brilliant contrast over her dress, was a rich, broad bonnet-scarf of blue, fringed at the ends, as I had seen the Edgells' last Sunday. Theirs were violet, and green; the gifts, and the suggestion of the new style, had been from Cousin Augusta. It was a simple, graceful fashion that had just come up, infinitely taking to my fanciful eye, of replacing all the perks and pinks and bows of flimsy gauze, and the tawdry flowers, such as had been worn, with a single band of wide lutestring passed up from under the chin across the bonnet in the depression between front and crown, and tied at one side in a careless knot or loop, with long ends fluttering down upon the shoulder. Next to a veil, it was the loveliest head-gear I had ever seen.

"I have brought this over for you, dear," said Cousin Augusta; and then the sky fell down.

Something seemed to make the beautiful thing she held out to me oseillate before my vision from side to side, like the leaping reflektion of light from a moving mirror. I fairly put my hands up to rub my eyes.

"Get your bonnet, Nansie; let's try it on."

She took it for granted I should dare. She took upon herself, perhaps purposely, the responsibility of act and instigation. Otherwise, how shoule I have laid a sacrilegious finger on that Sunday finery of mine, which, once put together under Aunt Ildy's order and supervision, became that inviolable thing the "new" and "best;" which should continue such

through whatever gradual fading, and crushing, and fraying, till the same august authority should ordain a substitution.

Nothing but bits of curled and shabby ribbons, defaced, unmeaning flowers, and scraps of flabby lace they were which Augusta Hare removed so unconcernedly, and laid into a little worthless heap ; but I trembled at every stitch she snipped, and every pin she drew, as if she were laying violent hands on the pillars of some sublime institution. I caught my breath, while she chatted easily and pleasantly.

What made her take this notice of me, and show me this kindness ? She knew how I worshipped her ; and she liked to be worshipped. She knew I had been drawn, atom as I was, into her irresistible sphere, and had become a little satellite. The tremendous force of gravitation is a mutual thing ; the great sun himself cannot but lean a little, in his turn, towards the smallest orb that wheels about him. Otherwise, there was nothing in me that could have won a thought of hers, far less her love.

The open straw was lined with white ; she put some of the freshest of the little blue flowers, picked out and arranged as only her fingers could do it, about the face, and then she set it on my head, bending it deftly, tied it by the little inside strings, and passed the rustling elegance about it, knotting it at the side with one upstanding loop, and drawing the full ends out handsomely, all of which made a great rushing sound about my ears while her hands were busy at it, and sent a quiver all over me of mingled ecstasy and apprehension. What would Aunt Ildy say ? But, oh ! was it not beautiful when she led me to the glass to look ?

“ Now do it yourself, and let me see. Not too long a bow ; there, just that ; the shortest end forward and uppermost,—so ; it’s just as pretty as it can be, and it covers all the pin-plaques. Why, the bonnet looks quite new ! ”

Oh, dear me, if Aunt Ildy had heard that ! When it was my “ new ” bonnet — bought and trimmed three months ago !

I don’t suppose it entered Augusta Hare’s head that she had done an impertinent thing, she was so used to choosing and changing for herself, and the Edgells thought nothing of tak-

ing the like little fancies and liberties with their dress. It was only I who dared not say that my bonnet was my own. I dared not even confess to Augusta Hare that it was not. I could only kiss her and thank her for her gift, and stammeringly "hope that Aunt Ildy—" "Oh! Miss Chism will be sure to like it," she interrupted, where I could not have finished. "It's all the fashion, and plain too; nothing dashy about it; just the thing to wear with your white, ruffled, dimity coat."

And, kissing me again, she went downstairs.

I put all the scraps, which were fit only to have gone straight to the rag-bag, reverently into the bottom of the bandbox, and shut the bonnet in with them, the bright scarf tied across it as it should be worn; for I liked to leave it so, and there was the vague thought of Aunt Ildy, who must come to see it sooner or later, and to whom otherwise it would have simply seemed a denuded and annihilated thing, since she could never have taken in the unexpressed idea; and I went back to my darning — rich, and glad, and frightened to death.

I suppose if I had been six or eight years older, and had gone and got privately married, I could not have come back into Miss Chism's presence with a more awful consciousness upon me than I bore that night. I cowered guiltily within myself when Uncle Royle spoke kindly to me, and felt a condemned traitor as Aunt Ildy helped me to butter. Confession was struggling to my lips; I longed to ease my mind; but I waited, turning over phrases that should not quite choke me; nay, that should seem innocently fearless, taking it for granted that the thing should be approved.

"O aunty!" I began, desperately, once, as she had her head in the cupboard, putting by the cake, "Miss Augusta Hare has given —"

"The cheese, Anstiss," said Aunt Ildy, with neither interest nor attention diverted by my words from what she was about. "And the quince. Quick!"

I handed her from the tea-table what she called for, and she closed and buttoned the cupboard; closed and buttoned my

lips also ; for how could that sudden remembrance occur to me in like manner again ?

She kept me busy with the dishes, and running to and fro ; then she got out the cribbage-board, and she and Uncle Royle began their unfailing game. I had some knitting and worked tremulously at that.

Once more, a little later, as they gathered up their tricks after a hand, I did essay :—

“ O aunty ! I was going to tell you — ”

“ Fifteen two, fifteen four, a pair is six ; six, seven, eight and six, seven, *eight* is twelve, and his nob — thirteen ! ” counted Uncle Royle, and put me out again.

CHAPTER II.

PUNISHMENT.

I WAS putting away the last of the pink-edged cups and plates in the high oak dresser the next morning after breakfast, when I heard Aunt Ildy go down the half flight of stairs which led to the street door, and Richard Hathaway's cheery voice greeting her below.

"I've driven mother down this morning, you see, Miss Chism. She's got shopping to do in the town, and — well, you'd best step out, if you'll be so good, and she'll tell you her plans herself."

I came as far as the jog in the passage, and caught a glimpse of Mrs. Hathaway's kindly and comely face leaning forth from behind the canvas side of the covered wagon, where she sat holding the reins while her son should bring in box and basket.

"Yes, Ildy," she was saying, "it's a proper pleasant day, and there wasn't much of a load to go or come, so we took the wagon, Richard and I; and what I want is that when we get along back, — three o'clock, say, — you an' Anstiss'll have your things on to go out with us to the farm and spend Sunday. Lucreshy'll take care of Royle for once, I guess, — I don't suppose there's any use of asking him, — and the rowen's bein' cut, and the fields are as sweet as June. It'll do you good; especially the child."

I wished she had not said that last word; not that Aunt Ildy really would grudge me a good; but she would feel I had no business to be put first, or "specially."

"Oh, I don't exactly know how," she began, in reply. "Saturday's a poor day to drop things just where they are. I aint ever much given to jaunting, you know. I guess you'd

better come back here and take an early tea, and ride home in the edge of the evening. We'll come out some other time, — a week-day, maybe."

"No such a thing, Ildy Chism. Some other time isn't any time at all. It won't be you if your house isn't Sunday-straight by two o'clock, and I shall just carry out my own calculation, or not come back here at all, — unless, indeed, you'll let Anstiss go without you."

"That wouldn't do. There'd be nothing of her to come back a-Monday. She'd leave a piece on every bush on the farm. If you're so set, — well, I'll see about it."

This was New-English for full consent; for thanks and all, with Aunt Ildy. So I knew we should go; and I had great ado to hold myself quiet, and wait for proper notice of her intention from Aunt Ildy herself, after she should have "seen about it." I did not think, though, she need have made me out quite such a romp. I was ashamed to have Richard Hathaway stand there and hear her speak so of me.

He came in just then, with the nice, fresh-smelling box of new-made butter, and the basket of hardly less fragrant eggs, warm and spotless right out of the hay. He always brought them in himself, though Lucretia often met him at the door, and would have taken them. He always had a pleasant word for me too, though Richard Hathaway was never given to much talking.

"Are you glad, Nansie?" He saw by my face, I am sure, that I had heard.

"I shall be when it's time," I answered, demurely. I had never heard of such things then, but I knew practically well enough the difference between informal information and official announcements. In Aunt Ildy's regime nothing was, until she declared it to be.

Richard looked in my eyes and laughed. I knew why; I felt them dancing in my head; and there had been a tilt in my voice that I tried to make so calm.

"The old Cropple-crown has got fourteen chickens."

There was no use in trying then; I laughed out, all my delight bubbling over together with this last drop. Aunt

Ildy came in and found me so. She thought Richard had told me. She said nothing till Richard had gone, and then only sharply :—

“ You needn’t be too sure. I haven’t decided yet. It will depend.”

I understood that. Oh, if I only could please her all the morning and seem not to be too happy about anything particular ! I tried to move round as usual, and not to dance or sing. I did not ask her a single question, but waited patiently. I bit my lips when ecstatic thoughts came suddenly, and checked myself on the very verge of glad “ ifs.”

For three hours I truly believe I never once remembered my bonnet. When I did think of it, there was no chance for anything like casual mention. I should have had to follow her pertinaciously into a closet, or waylay her in full career, and make it a regular confession. I did not see why I need put myself at that disadvantage.

O Aunt Ildy ! with everybody else I was a frank child ; with yourself, you tempted me to be old and wary. This was the greatest harm you did me.

I was to wear my gingham cape-bonnet to ride over and run about the farm in, of course ; Aunt Ildy would never “ hear to ” my “ flacketting round ” in my best things on any but best occasions. My little bandbox held, as well as my bonnet, my white dimity coat pinned up in a large old towel. Aunt Ildy gave it to me to put in, and left the box itself in my charge, telling me not to carry it upside down. My heart fluttered up and back again between its proper place and my throat, as she did so. I stood beside the bed with my back turned to her, and when the choke went down a little began again :—

“ Aunt Ildy ! Just see — ” but here I heard her voice suddenly calling to Lucretia from the farther stair-head. She was everywhere at once this busy day.

So dinner came, and three o’clock, and the Hathaways ; and Richard helped Aunt Ildy in upon the back seat with his mother, and lifted me up in front to sit with him. Aunt Ildy’s bandbox, containing her Sunday bonnet and best cap,—

she, too, religiously reserved her best and wore her green calash,—was made room for under the seat, and she took her double-covered basket in which were our night-clothes in her lap. Richard put my little box between his feet, “so that,” he whispered, “I might drive, by and by;” and we were off up the long River Street and out among the meadows.

The farm was four miles away, just on the edge of Broadfields; within a mile or so of Broadfields meeting-house, where we should go to-morrow.

Our ride that afternoon is one of the things that come up most vividly in my recollection of old days. Its hope and delight and dread were so intense, by turns; its beguiling of beauty and present content were so full, at times, and so forgetful of the rest.

We used to have “rides” then; they were a great deal better things than “drives” are nowadays. I cannot more than half fall in with the new-fashioned precision, and I am inclined somewhat to dispute its being so precise after all. It leaves some inconvenient open questions and ambiguities. For instance, do you drive, or ride, or what then, in a stage-coach or a horse-car? And what is the difference when one actually holds the reins? You drive *yourself*, or somebody else, do you? Very well; what do you do with the horse?

I *rode* that day sitting by Richard’s side, he managing the great brown bay; I *drove* when he gave it up to me for a safe, level space, and a few watchful minutes on his part; the driving was dignified and exciting; the riding was passive, dreamy, haunted with imaginations, freshened with new thoughts that came in, manifold, by the wayside.

It was early in September, and the white and purple asters were beginning to smile and nod by the fences; the sweet-briars were perfecting their scarlet ovals, and the fragrance of ripening fruits and late hay-crops came up under the harvest sun. Flocks of turkeys were roaming the stubble of early grain-fields; there were heaps of corn, waiting for the husking, already gathered into some of the great, open barns; some of the stirring housewives had got out goodly strings of apples to dry against the clapboards; one began, in the midst

of the warmth and perfume of summer, to get a flavor of the coming cheer and plenty and snugness of a New England winter. It is with this meeting of ripeness and beauty, this focal point of joy where labor and reward, growth and rest, salute each other and their mingled breath is on the air, that autumn recompenses for the harsh doubts and strifes, the uncertain advance and retard, the delays and chills and disappointments of that opposite pole of the year, our American spring. Every sense brings back to me at this moment what every sense enjoyed that day, so long ago. And I can look back now and take the good of it, which was the life of it, while the pain, which was a passing thing, is done with.

The pain came up when we saw Broadfields spire between the hills. I must tell her to-night; I ought to have told her long before. I had, in a manner, obtained a pleasure under false pretences, coming out here with her, bringing undeclared iniquity in my innocent-looking band-box before her very eyes. I knew what she would think and say, but I began to feel that it must be to-night, at all hazards; it would be too audacious to put the bonnet on to-morrow. I am sure I looked pale and wild when Richard Hathaway lifted me down over the wheel, and gave the box into my hand.

I followed Aunt Ildy up into the best bedroom, trembling. I remember I stood and looked at the little balls on the white curtain fringes, moved lightly in the gentle air that came in at the opened windows, as one looks at little senseless things like these, when one is about to suffer a great pain or danger.

Aunt Ildy was pinning on her cap at the glass. There was something brave and honest, after all, in my telling it then; for my visit had not fairly begun; there were dreadful things in her power, besides I had truly tried before.

"Aunt Ildy, Miss Augusta Hare made me a present, yesterday, of a scarf for my bonnet, and showed me how to put it on. It is just like those she gave the Edgells, only theirs are purple and green. Mine is blue."

I don't know how I said it all. Something came up in me with my honest, though tardy effort, of a sustaining consciousness that I had a right to put it so,—as a simple matter in

which I looked for no blame,—and to claim, of course, her interest and appreciation for the gift. While I spoke, I opened the bandbox and took the bonnet out. I adjusted the bow, and smoothed the floating ends. I held it forth—in a dead silence.

I think Aunt Ildy was fairly at a loss for words. I had never done anything like this before. Now it was a greatness thrust upon me. It was like a Declaration of Independence. I don't know how John Hancock and the rest felt when they had done it. I only know my teeth would have chattered if I had not held them forcibly apart, and that all my breath was gone.

Her great gray eyes looked at me in a way they had, as if the very Day of Judgment were coming down out of them. I waited, trying not to let the inward tremble become a visible shake, or the Day of Judgment know I saw it.

“ You — little — artful — hypocrite ! ” came at last with the most awful and bitter deliberation. “ You think you have got here, do you ? And your bonnet with you ? And that I can’t help it ? Lay that thing down. Open that basket. Take out your night-gown. Now undress yourself and go to bed.”

She said it all slowly, and in a monotone, her finger on the unfastened side of her cap, and then turned round to the glass again, and put in the last pin.

I laid the thing down,—the beautiful thing that might have given me so much pleasure. I opened the basket, and took out my night-gown,—a plain little garment with straight sleeves and ungarnished neckband, made last winter of brown cotton, and partly bleached by wearing and washing to a fitness for summer use. And then I turned and faced Aunt Ildy in the glass, while I reached up over my shoulders to unfasten my frock.

“ Don’t say I was artful, Aunt Ildy. I wanted you to know, and I tried to tell you, but I couldn’t get a chance.”

“ *Chance !*”

The contempt, the utter discredit, the putting to shame and absurdity of such a plea, the flinging back my truth into my

face as a lie, — all these, inflected in that one word, could neither be spelled nor punctuated.

My cheeks, my ears, tingled with anger. I heard little electric snaps in my head, and they seemed to go out at my eyes. If I had been six years old, instead of twelve, I should have stamped and slapped at her. I hated her at that minute, as only a child outraged and exasperated, can hate. I relieved myself with a venomous impertinence.

"You take up people's words, Miss Chism. That is very ill-mannered."

Then she came to me and shook me; shook me and glared at me, and at last pushed me roughly toward the bed. I let myself fall upon it, and shut my eyes and tried to faint away. I often tried and longed for this; tried and longed when my blood was boiling, and wondered that I could not bring it to pass.

Aunt Ildy looked at me as one who had done her duty, and who left me to my tantrums and my conscience. I believe she truly felt that she did her duty by me, and that it was she upon whom it fell hard. She kept on doing it. I will do her the justice to say she never flinched. Whatever praise belongs to her for that, let me award it.

She left me and went downstairs. As soon as she had gone, I put off fainting, and got up and bolted the door. I knew I should not dare to leave it so; but there was a temporary relief in pretending to myself that I had shut her out.

I was only a child, and not a vindictive one. Children's intense passions are mercifully short-lived; by the time I had taken off my stockings, I had begun to cool. By the time I got my night-gown on, I began to feel I had been in fault. That was the sting always; I was never persecuted wholly for righteousness' sake; I knew I *was* persecuted, and I could wish it might have been for once as a pure martyr. Then I could have known a kind of glorious joy in my resentment; a thrill of sweetness in my grief. This was a piece of my prose; I knew, after all, that I was only a commonplace, naughty girl, and I could never faint away.

In my thought of myself I was true, — ever unsparing. I confessed to myself that I had not been blameless. Tears

came down my hot cheek, and I was sorry. I undrew the bolt and crept into bed, and made up my mind that I would say so to Aunt Ildy. I always did say so in the end ; I said it so often, alas ! that she came not to care for it, or believe it. "I should like to see something of it," she would say. I meant she should see something of it ; perhaps if she had been anybody else, she would have done so. I was as truly penitent as I had been wicked, only these states alternated so swiftly and unexpectedly with each other. "There was no consistence in it," Aunt Ildy said.

The bed was pleasant, after all ; it was better than it would have been to go down there. I was exhausted, and my good time there was spoiled, at any rate. I could lie here and watch the afternoon away in peace. I was at peace ; with a child, to be sorry is to be at once inwardly forgiven. I only wondered, now and then, with a little tremor of mortification, what Richard and Mrs. Hathaway would think.

The bed stood right across a western window, and this looked down into an orchard. I could smell ripe apples, and hear faint clucks and chirps of feathered families picking up meat suppers of bugs and worms. The wide sky would be all golden and purple and red, by and by, as the sun went down ; and the moon and the little stars would be out above the hills. I heard the great wagons creaking up to the barn, and the hay-sweetness was shaken out into all the air, as the men tossed it up with their forks into the windows.

As the sun slanted round, ceasing to fall full across me, I put out my hand and softly pushed back the green blind, and then I could see into the tree-tops in which lived little birds ; off where white clouds lay low along the heaven, waiting to put on their glory ; away to green hill-sides and far-off grazing cows and sheep.

Well, I *was* here, as Aunt Ildy said ; and she could not help that. Not until Monday morning. Now and then I thought I heard her coming, and would pull back the blind again. I must not let her know that I could escape so into all this beauty and delight. She must believe me to be quite

miserable, or her duty would not be done. Was this deceitfulness of nature, or only the instinct of self-defence?

The keeping-room was on the east side of the house down-stairs. Behind it were the little tea-parlor, Mrs. Hathaway's room, and the kitchen. I and the sunset would be quite by ourselves. This was good.

As I lay thinking how good, something came flying in suddenly through my open window and fell upon my bed. Not a bird. A great red-brown, odorous pear. Another shot followed. This was a peach as big as my two hands could hold ; amber-colored on one side, crimson on the other ; a little mist of dust-colored down like a veil over the whole. I knew the wind did not blow them in. I knew in a minute that good, kind Richard Hathaway was there, and that he did not despise, but pitied me, in my fault and my imprisonment. I heard a step crunching the short-cut grass-stems as he walked away.

In a few minutes came a gentle "Biddy ! Biddy !" with the steps again, and a fluttering and clucking and chirping that drew nearer and nearer. I sat up, pulled the blind to screen myself, and looked through it from behind the back edge of the curtain. I saw the old Cropple-crown, and I counted her fourteen chickens. I saw Richard too, who had lured them patiently down under my window, standing back under the house wall, never once looking up, throwing meal-dough from a tin pan among them.

"Oh, the cunning things !" I cried, quite off my guard ; and I saw Richard Hathaway smile, but still he never looked up.

I don't know ; but sometimes I think now, when I recollect of him things like these, that they came somehow nearer to poetry and chivalry,—small, common things though they were,—through their kindly meaning, and the delicate, thoughtful way in which he managed them, than I dreamed of at the time, or for long after. Chivalry is not all in riding tilts, or storming towers, or wearing ladies' gloves ; nor even in sending bouquets to front doors, or singing serenades under windows, as the young men of New Oxford had been taken with doing, in

an epidemic sort of way, ever since Augusta Hare had been staying at the Edgells.

Aunt Ildy came up in rigid, stony, systematic displeasure, which was a part of her discipline and fulfilment of duty to-me-ward, and brought me a plate of bread and butter, and a glass of water, at six o'clock. She set it down upon a chair beside the bed without a word. Even the wicked must not starve, bodily. There is a sixth commandment against that. But for a kind, forgiving word, a look of tender mercy unconstrained, a glance that questions hopefully if better things may yet have begun to be; it is well that the child-spirit should be put on diet, should long and faint, and feel punished and cast out, till it lose its appetite even, and cease to care, and fall into a moral atrophy. Well for the world that God knew better, and sent down his Son!

I think back and look upon my then self in a strange kind of pity, when I remember how I repented toward this icy unrelenting, and shed warm tears against this face of rock.

"Aunt Ildy. Please forgive me. I am sorry I spoke to you so." Aunt Ildy's hand was on the cover of the bandbox in which she had thrust the offending bonnet out of sight.

"Oh, yes; you're always *sorry*. Where's the pieces?"

"Down at the bottom.—Won't you, Aunt Ildy? Mayn't I begin again?"

"I've no doubt you will begin again, the first chance you get."

She knew well enough what I meant; yet this was all the answer she would give me, wresting my words to a bitter sneer; and so she took the bonnet, gathered up the remnants of its past identity, and walked away downstairs.

I always longed so to "begin again;" to rub out the old mistake and misery, to prevail on the hard eyes to shut themselves against the past, and to watch for and remember only the new and better future that I meant should be. Only One does that for us; He who "blots out our iniquities and covers our sins."

I used sometimes, involuntarily, to plead so, when I failed suddenly in a lesson at school that I thought I knew. I used

so to entreat Lucretia, when I had been mischievous in the kitchen, and she threatened to turn me out and send me off upstairs. "Oh, let me stay and begin again!" It is the everlasting beseeching out of the pain and shame and the slow struggle of humanity.

Did Aunt Ildy never need to cry out in like manner herself for any failure in her life? I do not know. It seemed to me a peculiarity in her constitution that, having once set out and determined to be rigidly righteous, the possibility of her ever, by any slip, or self-delusion, or infirmity, finding herself at fault, after all, like common unexacting mortals, never even faintly occurred to her from that time forth; as if, having once woke up early in the morning, no getting behindhand afterward, through loss or waste of the plentiful minutes, could take away that primal fact, or change the value of her day.

Well, I could never begin again, except in one thing,—that was my garter knitting. If I dropped a stitch and made a hole in that, I could ravel out, and wind up, and cast new stitches, and go on until my fingers made another blunder. "That was all it amounted to," Aunt Ildy said. When she dropped a stitch she knitted it right in again. Sometimes it got turned and twisted in the picking up, but that did not matter. Nobody could find a hole in her work, and she never unravelled out.

I ate my bread and butter. I had my pear and my peach for sauce; and presently something more came through the window: one at a time, two long, brown, spicy, twisted doughnuts. Mrs. Hathaway made them in rings and balls, as well as twists; but Richard remembered that I liked twists best. It was better fun than Aunt Ildy knew; and since she would not let me be sorry and begin again, I put that off, and took such unsanctified comfort as I could get.

I got up early the next morning, without forbiddance. In truth I had been restless from before daylight. One cannot begin at four in the afternoon and lie still much beyond the same hour in the morning; and Aunt Ildy wanted, no doubt, a last nap undisturbed. So I dressed and went downstairs.

The best room door was partly open as I went by, and I

peeped in. There was an old-fashioned, round-framed, convex mirror over the chimney, in which you saw yourself diminished and far off. This was a great wonder and delight to me. I ventured in to take a little prance before it. But I was stopped, aghast, at what I saw upon the table beneath the window. My bonnet, re—what shall I say?—resurrected ; dug up again, as it were, very much the worse, as to its old form and idea, for having been buried. There are two things that not all the king's horses nor all the king's men can ever do in this world,—set Humpty Dumpty up again, or re-combine an old garnishing of bits and ends that have faded here, and crumpled there, and come to a certain unity of shabbiness, into anything like unity again. The last state of that bonnet is worse than the first. To this last state had Aunt Ildy's remorseless, retributive fingers brought the remains of mine. I could have cried ; but it was funny. It looked like an old bird that had had a fight ; or like an excited porcupine with two flabby tails. It bristled and it draggled at once. I wondered if she would actually make me wear it. While I stood there, Richard walked along the hall, and saw me and came in.

"Just look !" I said ; and then I made a little unexpected sort of sound, a "boo-higgle," I used to call it, when I half began to cry, and laughed in the middle of it. "I had a present of such a beautiful ribbon, and I put it on ; and Aunt Ildy has gone and made it back again into this."

Richard Hathaway took it up on his broad hand and turned it round.

"Well," he said, in his quiet way, "I always thought Miss Chism was a smart woman." That was all the notice he took of it ; and he laid it back, the limp gauze strings trailing down forlornly from the table. Whether that first suggested what came after, or whether he had seen her at it the night before, and had ample time for inspirations, I don't know ; but he took me off to the barn, and diverted my mind with chickens, and gray and white kittens, and Munchausen, his little spaniel puppy. I asked him what he called him so for,

and he laughed, and said Jabez thought it was a good name, “cause he was allers munchin’ and chawin’.”

I saw the cows milked ; and I milked one, to the extent of a teaspoonful, myself ; and I drank a mug full of white, warm, foaming milk, and then dipped off pure froth and sipped it ; and I stood on a big rock in the middle of the barn-yard, and watched the whole herd turned off down the green lane to find their pasture ; and then we went in to breakfast.

Richard brought Munchausen in and fed him in the kitchen. Aunt Ildy came down, and while Mrs. Hathaway took the brown, sweet biscuits out of the bake-kettle,— (there are no biscuits now so sweet as those that used to come to their perfection so, with the fervid embers heaped below and the coals of fire upon their heads),— we all stood round the kitchen hearth and warmed ourselves, for it was a cool autumn morning ; and then we went into the little tea-room, which was also breakfast-room, and night and morning condensed themselves together into an excess of content for me. Richard went round through the hall to turn Mun out at the front door. He shut the breakfast-room door after him when he came in, to keep out Mun and the wind, he said.

Mun, or the wind, or both, got in somewhere else, while we were at breakfast, where a door had not been shut.

When we came out to get the sunshine in the broad porch, there was a great battle still going on ; a growling, and a rushing, and a tearing, and a worrying, all up and down the grass-plat ; and Munchausen had got the best of it ; the strange thing with ears all over it and the two long tails, as he doubtless considered it, that had dared and enticed him by its bristling and fluttering when he and the wind looked in at the door, had drawn its own destruction down. Neither Aunt Ildy, nor the politicians of to-day, could ever have reconstructed that.

“ What is it ? ” cried out Richard, running after the dog, and dragging a mouthful of straw and munched rag from him.

“ What is it ? ” repeated Aunt Ildy, half in doubt herself, at first, and then turning a swift scrutiny on me. “ Why, it’s Anstiss Dolbeare’s bonnet ! That’s what it is.” As much as

to say, "Could a dog's enormity go further than that? And now be astounded, if you please!"

"Is it much hurt?" asked Richard Hathaway, holding it up, and speaking innocently.

I never had such a good time before in all my child-life as I had wandering off through the sunny fields and sweet-smelling orchards in my cape-bonnet, that day, with him. Jabez drove Mrs. Hathaway and Aunt Ildy to Broadfields, to meeting; and it was four o'clock when they came home to the Sunday tea-dinner.

Richard and I had carried our luncheon with us, of dough-nuts and sage-cheese and peaches; and had eaten it sitting on a great gray rock by the river.

CHAPTER III.

SOME PEOPLE, AND OTHER PEOPLE.

NOBODY would have believed after all this,— I certainly would not have believed it beforehand,— that the very next Sunday I should go to meeting in New Oxford, with Aunt Ildy, wearing a new Dunstable straw bonnet, with the identical blue scarf tied across it, by Augusta Hare's own hands.

It was Augusta Hare who did it. Of course I told her all my troubles Monday morning, when she walked “down street” with the Edgells and me on our way to school. We had come in from the farm before breakfast,— before Uncle Royle's, that is ; for Mrs. Hathaway would by no means let any guest depart from her door fasting ; and we had had the nice biscuits out of the bake-kettle, and the coffee straight from the trivet over the coals, and brown-bread cream toast, and baked beans, left over the Sunday dinner, stirred to a delicious crispness in the spider, at a quarter to six, and at a few minutes after the hour had been on our way ; our wheels making clean lines along the fresh, damp road, where the heavy dew had very nearly been a white frost ; and all the clearness and tingle and sparkle of far-off, rime-touched mountains and wide, breezy lakes coming down about us in the morning wind from the north-west.

Everybody was worth winning to Augusta Hare. The more difficult the approach, the more persevering would be her parallels. She had set to work to win Aunt Ildy. I wished her joy, at first, in her attempt ; then I stood by, wondering at her success.

The truth was, Miss Chism was like the moon,— she had two faces ; one turned always toward those she immediately belonged to, as she went round and round in her uncompromis-

ing orbit of daily work and duty ; the other toward the universe at large. The moon analogy fails here, or rather becomes a mystery ; whether she also wear a blander look out into space, toward the distant planets,—the desolation of her crags and craters being all heaped up on her earthward side,—may be or may not ; one cannot change one's position to remark ; but when I saw Aunt Ildy from the stand-point of any who approached her from the outside spaces about our own life, I marvelled at what a little strangerhood could do. She seemed ready to accredit such with all the virtues and graces that made up her ideal measure, by which such human creatures as had been closely proved and tried had miserably and ignominiously failed. There were nicks and blemishes and parts missing ; the pieces, therefore, must be somewhere. She took it for granted that the Edgells were all that I was not. If I quoted them, thinking to make argument and precedent in my own behalf, I only got the consequent crushing comparison.

"Yes ; *they* have it ; but I suppose *they* take care of their things," or, "they do, or go, thus and thither, to be sure ; but *they* are to be trusted ; *they* behave."

I know of nothing at once more exasperating and demoralizing to a child than this ; it either knows a great deal better, and that its companions are subject to all the like infirmities with itself, and therefore impotently rages against the injustice ; or it comes to think, at last, cowed by continual disparagement and condemnation, that it is different from and meaner than its fellows, and so to sink into a hopeless, cringing, effortless self-despite.

Augusta Hare came over that very Monday afternoon with a basket of fine Bartlett pears for Aunt Ildy from her uncle's garden, with Mrs. Edgell's love and compliments ; also, she wanted one of Miss Chism's wonderful receipts ; she gave a hint, with an air of confidence and a half-aside from me, that she was making up a manuscript receipt-book for herself, against one of these days when she might come to want it ; and Miss Chism's nod, and relaxing, benignant smile toward her, and the hardness on the side of the face next me, as if it were quite a pretty and natural thing for Augusta so

to look forward, but that I need not pretend to understand or to be interested in what not only now, but at any distant period whatever, could by no possibility concern such as I,—that, in fact, it was a presumption in me to be sitting by while she said it, or even to be living and growing up in a world where marrying and giving in marriage and having a house and a way and a life of one's own could come to be in question,—was a marvellous and moonlike thing to see. But at that time I had not yet studied astronomy; I only felt unhappy, and that I was on the rough, craggy, crater side, as usual.

Never mind. Augusta beamed and sparkled, and was shone upon. And so she came round to the bonnet.

She apologized so prettily for the liberty that perhaps she had taken; "but Miss Chism had not been by to ask, and she knew she was very busy. She was so used to trimming and untrimming for herself, alone in the world as she was, that she never considered; and didn't Miss Chism think it was a good thing for girls to learn a knack of the sort, of contrivance and taste for themselves? They could have so much more variety, and it saved so much trouble and expense."

That last word, coming with such a charming deference to the duty of economy from the young heiress of a whole street-full of stores in H—, and of unknown bank shares, finished it with Aunt Ildy. It was like a decorous occasional reverence manifested toward things sacred by a non-professor.

"That was true," she said, "where people *had* a knack, and would not be always wasting and spoiling. But the variety, she didn't know about. She liked to wear things straight through, and make them last the season."

"Oh, *do* you?" asked Augusta, with the most charming candor and confidence. "Well, now I do like changing, if it's only to put a bow on the other side, or move my bed across my chamber. I'm always turning things round; for my part it seems to make them nicer and last longer."

"It's very well to wear a carpet even," admitted Aunt Ildy, briefly.

(The very next day, upon the strength of this, I tried it by

putting the washstand and table in new places in our room, when I was sent up to make the bed ; but the noise I made brought up Aunt Ildy, as if it had been an incantation. "Isn't that pleasanter?" I said, timidly. "And you can get to the closet easier." — "Are you possessed, Anstiss Dolbeare? Put those things back ; and when I'm ready for you to keep house for me, I'll let you know !" So I found out, speedily enough, that some people are not other people.)

Augusta was "so sorry to find that there had been an accident, — that the bonnet was quite spoiled. She was going down to the city with her uncle on Wednesday, and could she do anything about replacing it for Miss Chism ?"

"Perhaps she could get something prettier and cheaper than in New Oxford, and the new fall styles would be out there."

" Didn't Miss Chism think a Dunstable would be better for cool weather, and more durable? It could always be bleached and pressed so nicely, you know."

And when, by degrees, she had brought Miss Chism to listen indulgently to all this, — "wouldn't she, to show she wasn't offended, just let Anstiss wear the blue ribbon, after all?"

All this by degrees, as I say, carefully feeling her steps. She stayed to tea, and praised Aunt Ildy's drop-cakes, and fell in love with the pink-edged cups, and insisted on having a towel and helping to wipe them up afterward, and she wanted to learn cribbage, and got her first initiation into the mysteries of "fifteen two, fifteen four," while she was bringing it about ; and the end was, almost without Aunt Ildy knowing it, that she was led round to the very point she had set herself against. Only it was a concession to Augusta Hare, and to circumstances, and by no means for the sake of pleasing me. The gauze ribbons were chewed up ; and the blue scarf now was "in the house." Aunt Ildy could not have so gone against her creed and her instinct as to "buy new when old would do." It had been on and off, and laid by ; it was old now, in a sense ; the idea, at least, had ceased to be so offensively new to Aunt Ildy, and her indignation had been appeased. I sat by, and let them settle it ; as if, through my fault and my punishment and my mortification, it had ceased to be of much

consequence to me how they decided. I did not do this, I think, of deliberate art, but as simply taking the attitude Aunt Ildy would expect of me ; and so things came round.

Only I was worse off by a suffering and a disappointment, and a chilled, repulsed, inferior feeling, and a premature lesson in diplomacy, and Aunt Ildy by the price of a new Dunstable straw bonnet.

I wonder why such trifling episodes as these stand out first and most clearly when I think of those young days? All my life, to be sure, was made up of small, commonplace things ; but why these should so live and last, stamped so ineffaceably in their least details,—that is what surprises me sometimes. Ah, it is not the form life takes, but the living ! Under these trifles of outward experience, something intense and ineradicable was shaping and vitalizing ; the moods and impressions which these influences induced were becoming my self ; were determining my whole nature and fate.

I used to wonder, in a vague way, if ever things would begin to concern me as they concerned others. If I should ever have a definite part—an interest of my own—in this earnest, urgent living that I saw about me in a world upon whose mere skirts, as yet, I seemed to hang. I think Aunt Ildy would have been frightened sometimes, if she could have known the turn my repressed and restless thoughts and half-understood longings were taking. I used to like to walk in the burial-ground, I remember ; the “graveyard” as we used lugubriously to call it then, when churches were meeting-houses ; and I used to feel sure of that one thing only ; that this, at least, would come to me, as it came to all ; that I should lie there with a gravestone at my head ; and it seemed to me that I should be of more consequence then than I had ever been before. I even wondered if Aunt Ildy would think things “worth while,” then, for me, as for anybody else ? Whether she would let a gravestone be carved, and whether she would really wear a black bonnet, if I died ? I could not somehow conceive of her doing so, only for me. So many things now, in my lifetime, never were worth while.

Augusta Hare went away from New Oxford at last, in a

fresh grandeur and environment of dignity and romance. After many indecisions about the school to which she should be sent, her own strong wish had carried the day against some prejudices of her uncle, and it was decided for her to go to the Convent of Ursuline nuns at Charlestown, near Boston. Her musical education, in which there was a real talent to be taken into account, was the chief consideration in influencing this result.

For nights, I could not sleep soundly, after I heard of this. My imagination was stirred by all that was most poetical and picturesque ; to say nothing of the religious element, which added sublimity and awe. To live among cloistered women wearing solemn, typical black veils, to call them Sister Mary and Sister Agnes and Sister Annunciata, as they were called in the stories I had read, to hear matins and vespers, to worship in a chapel, to eat in a refectory, to recite lessons to people who had just done mystical penance ! To have all this combined with the charm of ordinary boarding-school association, so great to me, — girls of an age classed together for study, for recreation, for sleep even, — having the community and sympathy in all things which made even rigid rules a delight, and stealthy grumblings and stolen privileges an ecstasy ! I got all this jumble of fanciful ideas into my head, and at this time there was nothing that seemed so beautiful or so intensely desirable to me as to go to a convent ; as a nun, if possible ; at least, as a scholar. I was so proud of Augusta Hare's notice, and of knowing her so well ! I told Lucretia, over and over, all that this heroine of mine could tell to me, for the mere pleasure of saying the words ; I dare say, although she was older and more sensible, and used to remarkable things, Augusta's own pleasure in answering my curiosity was not so very different.

The Edgells went away to school soon after ; they were disappointed in not being with their cousin ; but though he had yielded in her case, Mr. Edgell was firm as regarded his daughters. It happened at last that they and Laura Cope became pupils at the same institution, a young ladies' seminary in a town some thirty miles from New Oxford.

I spent an afternoon with them just before they left. I saw their new trunks with their own names upon them, packed with all manner of nice, plentiful clothing, to be worn at their own discretion, and with numberless articles of ladylike convenience suggested by motherly forethought or their own wish. How beautifully their ruffles were all crimped ! I saw Mrs. Edgell doing one with a delicate, thin-bladed, ivory knife, as she sat in her little sewing-room where the girls ran in and out, bringing me with them, asking half a hundred questions, and contriving dozens of new wants. She was not impatient with them ; her pleasure was in theirs. Oh, yes ; it was the really poetical and beautiful thing to have an own mother !

I went "down street" with them to the confectioner's, where they laid in store of "goodies" to take to school. They spent, I think, three dollars apiece, that afternoon ; and we came home laden with fragrant white paper parcels. There were things among them that I never had heard the names of before ; but then, I had never had three dollars in my life to spend in confectionéry, or at my own pleasure in any way.

After this, my days "went on and on." If I could escape disgrace with Aunt Ildy, and get into Lucretia's room in the afternoon with my mending, or into the garden with a book, it was the sum of my desire and expectation. My lessons were a pleasure to me ; I was ambitious and bright. I could learn fast, and keep the head of my class. I brought home my weekly reports, and Uncle Royle signed them ; he would have a kind word for me when they were all "sixes and sevens," which, contrary to proverbial usage, indicated the best possible order of things on Mr. B——'s book ; as to Aunt Ildy, I don't remember her even looking at them. She inspected my stockings, after I had darned them ; and they had need to be firmly done, even to an improvement on the original texture ; for if her strong fingers could go through a thin place, or make themselves visible under a careless cross-threading, there would be no saving of time for me in that ! I accused her sometimes, with rebellious indignation, of *punching* holes ; it occurs to me that her fashion of moral inspection and criticism was not far otherwise.

I wore my Dunstable straw with the blue ribbon all the way on into November until Thanksgiving. I got tired to death of it; I believe Aunt Ildy knew I would, and that that was part of my punishment. She gave me my request, but sent leanness into my soul. It had been a very pretty passing fashion, retained only just so long as it could be what it expressed, a freshness and an unpremeditation; an impromptu of trimming, caught up and put on carelessly; but it came, with me, to be a thing as old and worn as a shoe-string. I had to tie it on myself every time I wore my bonnet; and I had not Augusta Hare's adroit fingers. The ropy part twisted itself longer and longer with every wearing, and the wrinkles came down into the floating ends; the bow withered, and would not stay picked out. It came to ironing, and the whole looked streaked and faded. Other girls had new fall trimmings of bright crimsons and warm browns, crossed snugly around the crowns, and nice bows made once for all on the top; while I put my bonnet on still, as I said privately to Lucretia, with a garter. It was the bare prose that all things came to, for me.

I began to wish, at scarcely thirteen, that I could be really good enough not to care for anything. I had been good, a little, several times already, and given it up. In moments of spiritual depression, therefore, I feared, already, lest all should be over with me, and that I could never be saved. I thought I must be the one unmitigated thing or the other; that if I gave a thought to my new shoes, or took it into my head to curl my hair, or cared for my composition getting the highest mark and being read out on a Saturday, that I might as well leave off reading my Bible and saying my prayers. Indeed, I truly believed that I should be a hypocrite if I kept on. I must go in at the wicket-gate with Christian, and follow the toilsome way, or I must stay in the City of Destruction, and live the life of it. I must choose between the "Pilgrim's Progress" and my dear old novels; and so it would be that sometimes one and sometimes the other would get the better of it with me. Aunt Ildy believed in nothing that I did. She could see, of course, when I was "trying;" she gave me no

credit for it ~~at~~ at the time,—it was only one of my whims; she helped my unsteadiness with no Christianly patience; but I heard of it afterward, when I had grown bad again; she “thought the goodness wouldn’t last long.”

I wondered what the real world-and-devil-proof goodness was made of; what it was ~~was~~ that happened to people who were truly converted.

There was an awakened religious interest in the town this very winter; there were Thursday prayer-meetings for church-members, which Aunt Ildy attended, and there were Bible-classes and inquiry-meetings for the young. I went regularly every Wednesday, at one time, to the minister’s house; this was when my bonnet was at the worst. I heard of one after another having become hopeful,—between night and morning, perhaps; it was the news at school. I looked wonderingly at companions who yesterday were sinners and to-day were saints. I questioned why, with the same means of grace, and the same wish and effort as I believed, it did not come to me. I kept on patiently for a while, thinking that it would; but I could never honestly declare that it had. I was tempted profanely to compare it with Augusta Hare’s boarding-school pudding, which she had declined, for the reason that she saw it wouldn’t go round; indeed, precisely what I was to look for, of intense illumination or ecstasy, or vital, conscious, immediate change, was to me the mystery; and at last, one cold Sunday, Aunt Ildy brought out my wine-colored merino coat that I had worn three winters, and my bonnet, to which had been given the day before its contemporary winter fittings of the same color,—lining of good, thick, old-fashioned satin, and trimming of narrow velvet bands,—in which I felt always better dressed than in anything else I ever wore; and I became suddenly and hopelessly worldly again. Because I *did* take comfort in them, after the pale, stringy, tiresome blue ribbon, and such comfort was incompatible with the renouncing of the flesh. Such was my religious experience at thirteen. Out of it I came honest, and that was all.

Speculatively, I was at work, even then, upon matters of faith. These came to me by suggestion, in my daily studies.

I was learning chemistry this winter, and at the same time, Paley's "Natural Theology;" all about the watch,—in that first page, which, of whatever book, comes to be the page by heart of the youthful reader or student,—and then about the bones; in the other science, about the attractions, the affinities, the atomic theory, and the forms of matter,—solids, fluids, and gases; and what Swedenborgianism calls the "correspondence of things" began to show itself to me. I had not got far among the bones; but an older class was near the end of the book; and one day,—I was in the upper room of the academy now,—there happened a talk between this class and Mr. B—, our teacher. Their lesson for the day occurred in the chapter on the Personality of the Deity. The talk was upon the different mental conceptions of God; the image under which we think of him, since some image, consciously or unconsciously, we must make to ourselves. He was spoken of as pure, pervading spirit, everywhere and in all things; "in whom we live and move and have our being," enfolding us as the air enfolds the earth, filling all space, animating all life, quickening all spirit. Without touching upon dogma, in which I now think he would not have taught us as many of us were taught elsewhere, Mr. B— spoke of all this, in illustration of the idea possible to us of Omnipresent Being; and some girl asked suddenly, crimsoning with timidity as she did so, while I crimsoned with sympathy, "If He is everywhere and fills all, how can any other spirit be created and find room?"

I forget what our teacher answered; I do not know that I even listened to it. I only know that with a sudden tingle all through me, soul and body, what seemed a great perception came to me,—an answer out of the chemical laws and facts that I was learning,—the sentence of Dalton, that "different gases are as vacuums in respect to each other;" that space does not hinder them; that they can diffuse, one into another, intermingling, yet not combining; coexisting, and yet separate. Behind this wonder of material fact, the spiritual truth that was enshrined blazed forth. I got into my soul a revelation of all possible spiritual closeness and presence; ideas, old

enough in the world perhaps, but that filled me, seeming grand and new, came, new and grand, to me ; I began my life-climb.

Meanwhile, pondering these things in my heart, I remained at the outside, but a faulty, fitful child ; scarcely happy at home, and of no consequence elsewhere ; before whom the world looked at once tame and strange, barren and teeming, mystical and dreary.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT A VOICE TELLS.

THE SILENT SIDE.

A STORY by halves ; yes ; but that is not altogether enough either. Something else — a third — must concern itself now and then. No matter how, no matter who knows and tells, or how they found it out. Two halves do not necessarily make a whole one. The world is dual, we are told ; all creation running to pairs and complements ; oxygen and nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen ; night and day, up and down, right and left ; but there is always something behind ; an affinity, a force, a backbone ; chemical attraction, centrifugal and centripetal power, gravitation, structural centre. That is what something or somebody has got to be to whatever comes to be told, or to be gathered to a unit, at last ; else it might stay in halves, or piecemeal, forever. Ask no questions, therefore, for conscience' or arithmetic's sake ; if there be a combining agency, it is enough ; whether it work from sight or record, hearsay or intuition, or here and there from each and all. A silent story never will tell itself ; not even, as a story, to itself. That which wrought in thought and heart-throbs, without words, which took form in unnoticed, unobtrusive act, whose truest pathos was hidden under commonplace, must be rescued by some undeclared knowledge or insight, and translated, as best it may be, into words. It will be *only* a translation, after all. None can repeat these things as they truly write themselves, all around us, in the originals.

Outside circumstances also ; the bearing down and closing in of all that shapes and alters, intermingles with and concerns ; these must round out and perfect the meaning, and interpret

for our behoof. Stories outside of stories, and beside them ; that is the way the world is woven together.

Richard Hathaway was jogging along up the river road towards Broadfields from New Oxford, one winter's day, about the time, or a little later than that, of these things that Anstiss Dolbeare has been remembering.

The leather reins lay loosely along his horse's back ; the horse taking way and time for himself ; the sleigh-bells marking the regular double-beat upon the air of his slow-dropping hoofs.

Richard Hathaway was thinking. Feeling, perhaps, most ; that grand, unselfish, loving, patient, pitiful heart of his, (what kind of a man, pray, do you describe when you speak of a heart like that?) took the lead always ; the clear, quiet brain followed, and worked out the impulse. Did not *prescribe* it ; there is that order and distinction of life in the natural history of vertebrates, — species, human, — albeit not laid down in books of the science. Richard Hathaway, belonging to the first of these orders of life, — born, moreover, to a plain sphere and simple duties, — was not brilliant. Slow, perhaps, sometimes, in coming to conclusion or opinion ; never slow, or slack in act, when he saw the thing to be done ; always stanch and sure ; *right there* ; loyal to the backbone ; careful and kind for his mother, for every human creature ; for his horse and his dog ; for every chicken and kitten on the place. All over the farm the dumb creatures knew his ways and his voice, and went trooping after him. It seems to me that the nature of such a man has something of the great divine element in it ; something that goes toward the Fatherhood of God himself, — rather than anything small or weak, as some might say.

He was dressed in his every-day homespun, to-day ; they wore homespun yet, of a week-day, the plain men about Broadfields and New Oxford, who ploughed their own lands and drove their own teams to market ; and the hum of the old grandmother's spinning-wheels was heard yet in many an upper chamber. There was nothing, truly, in his outer bearing and equipment that bespoke him grand or chivalrous or

knightly ; that is why I must translate the silent side. A simple soul, come to his young manhood half-a-dozen centuries too late for vigil and accolade, and vow and emprise ; he had not ridden forth that morning in plumed helmet and shining armor, with lance in rest ; not even in a chariot-and-six like Sir Charles Grandison ; he had only driven an old horse in a large wagon-sleigh to carry some barrels of apples and some tubs of cider apple-sauce down to New Oxford for the distant city market ; but I will tell you what he had done. He knew of somebody who needed him, and a small kindness that he could give and never forgot, and he had come back four miles around out of his way in the stinging winter cold after an errand to the next village below, that he might return through New Oxford ; that he might stop again at Royle Chism's, and look in at the post-office, where there was precious little likelihood of anything more for him since morning, when he had got two letters, his mail for the week ; that he might also go in to the back sitting-room, and stay talking with Miss Chism for nearly an hour, till Anstiss came from afternoon school, and he could see for himself how she was to-day, and give her the pearmaines he had in his pocket for her, — such pearmaines as only grew on the Hathaway place, and there on but one old tree. He hadn't had a chance fairly to see her in the morning ; only through the kitchen door, as she sat there busy about something for Aunt Ildy, which it would have been a little piece of anarchy for her to leave.

He was riding home now, thinking some such thoughts as these : —

“ Mother doesn't know. How should she ? She doesn't see them every week, or oftener, as I do. She doesn't see the little face light up, and then the cowed-down, miserable look come over it, when that woman, that ought to be a mother to her, comes near, and the child don't dare to let her notice that she's taking a minute's comfort, for fear it should be cut short and she be ordered off. She always is ordered off. Why can't she have an idle minute, I wonder ? People can't grow unless they have a chance to stretch now and then, — men

and women, any more than babies ; to say nothing of a young, longing thing like her.

"Mother couldn't interfere, either, I suppose, if she did know. Everybody says Miss Chism does her duty by the child ; and it's only her way. I wonder if the way people get with them isn't something to be accountable for, though? I've no business to think about it perhaps, not being religious ; but what if the Lord Almighty did so by us? What if he had a "way" too, that hadn't any sunshine, nor any pleasantness, nor any rest in it? He might grind us round, so, somehow, I dare say ; and give us our daily bread, notwithstanding.—Start up, old Puttertroo. Nobody asked *you* to meditate.—

"I wish I had her by me, now, riding out to the farm ; to suck sweet cider and hunt hens' eggs, and help mother make her Thanksgiving. Why need Aunt Ildy have snubbed her so, if she *couldn't* be trusted to beat sponge cake? She might do something, I guess, besides stone those eternal raisins. The way to make folks trusty is to begin to trust. *I'd* trust her, with that little, earnest pleading way of hers, if it *was* the spoiling of a mess or so.

"She thinks too much. She's continually worrying about what fors and whys. Look in her face sometimes, you'd suppose she was twenty. I'd like to set the clock back for her a good half-dozen years ; she'd gain, then.

"I wish Miss Ildy'd — get married, or something else. Or that they might be burnt out, and nobody hurt, and not much loss ; or that somebody in England would leave 'em a fortune that'd have to be gone after. Something ought to come to pass. I'd like to get her home with us awhile. It's the kind of a place where she'd ought to be.

"Miss Ildy says she's fractious and flighty and impudent. I'd risk it. I never saw anything of it, and I've seen her when I should have been all three. 'That's because it's you,' says Miss Chism. 'She knows when to hold her tongue.' It seems to me that's sufficient, and she's learnt early. And it *would* be for me — and mother.

"We could'n't do *all* she'd want, I know. She wants

somebody to answer the what fors. I don't know as she'll ever find that, though. It's more asking than answering in this world, in most things. Asking back again, or asking on. Books and sermons don't amount to much more.

"She wants somebody now, right off, to make a pleasantness round her. That's what people *can* do for each other. She don't seem to get any child-comfort. She's never been taken up in anybody's lap. Miss Chism won't cosset anything. She says it gives kittens fits. That settles the matter, I suppose, for all creation.

"I wish mother could see any way to manage. 'Winter's no time,' she says. 'The best room's cold, and Miss Chism wouldn't think of coming.' But there's the little press-room between mother's and the kitchen, if Nansie could only come by herself. That's as warm as need be, and not lonesome.

"They need not be afraid about her getting there. I'd wrap her up in buffaloes till she wouldn't know she was out doors.

"I'll try Miss Chism myself. It'll never do to stop her school, and give her nothing else to take up her mind. She'd only be pining after her books. Royle Chism is talking of that. 'She's ailing,' he says, 'and she shall leave off studying and have the doctor.' Perhaps I could put a kink into Royle's head, and he into the doctor's. A change is always easy to prescribe; and Pulsifeare's an honest old soul, who wouldn't shove aside common sense for the sake of hanging on with pills and visits.

"She was pretty still and sober to-day; and she went right off upstairs with her books. She didn't know how long I'd been waiting. Perhaps she'd missed a lesson, along of those raisins in the morning. I dare say she's tired of the pearmains; I'll carry her something else next time. I'll shell out some butternuts and shagbarks; and maybe mother'll make some candy."—

Very homely thoughts; and homely consolations that he planned. It is plain that he could put none of the poetry that Anstiss Dolbeare longed for against the weary prose of her life, is it not? Are you sure, though, what the poetry of life is, when spiritual analysis gets it down to its very elements?

A week later, there was a great stir in the little press-room. Boxes and trunks were drawn out from under the broad shelf that ran across one whole side, against a window; blankets and comfortables that had been piled upon it were taken down, and all were carried away to an upstairs room, and bestowed in a large, light closet. The shelf itself was removed, and then the sunlight got in at the window, and the little apartment, which had used in old times to be a bedroom, showed its real dimensions.

Richard and his man Jabez did all this; and then Mrs. Hathaway's Martha came in and swept and scoured. A cot bedstead was put up, and a triangular shelf across a corner, beneath where the large one had been, was transformed by a white cover and a flounce to a quaint little dressing-table, elegant enough in its way, with a looking-glass in a carved frame tilted forward from the angle above it, and a great ruffled pin-cushion lying before it, and a silver candlestick and snuffers standing beside. In another corner was a washing-stand, with a high old china ewer, and broad, shallow basin,—buff, with delicate roses running and blowing all over them. Richard remembered these old things, and would have them got out, for he knew they would just suit Anstiss Dolbeare's fancy; “and she's to be pleased, you see, mother; that's the main thing now; that's what's to do her good.”

“It'll be mild to-morrow,” he was thinking to himself, stopping there when all was done, as he came through from Mrs. Hathaway's room, and looked out at the bright little window that seemed to sparkle all over with delight at its own capacity to take in sunshine as fast, in proportion, as its biggers and betters, when opportunity was given, and where the long slants from the clear west struck through and smote themselves obliquely upon the face of the mirror opposite, diverging thence by just the angle of reflection to light up the roses on the buff china, opposite again; like a sort of dance-figure as it was, leading up and across till all the little place was gay, and everything had had its turn.

“The wind's stilled down, and the sky looks mellow. I'll take the little sleigh, and the two big robes and the foot-stove.

We'll get her here just about this time, and mother'll bring her into this little nest, and speak to her in her kind way, and make her welcome. It's a complete home of itself where mother is. She's a good woman. And when you say a good woman you've said a whole Bible full.—

“Let me see, though ; the little sleigh ? There's that trace to be mended. Jabez'll have the small pung, and he'll want a light harness too. Lucky I thought of it ! And it's a chance if he's got those carrots up from the cider-mill cellar, while I've been putter-kooing here.

“Mun, you rascal ! what are you looking for ? Straw bonnets ? Can't have 'em. Off with you, sir ! Somebody at the door, hey ? Tell 'em I'm coming.—Hope it's Kilham, about that bargain. If I can get him down to sixty, it'll be three hundred, and that's enough ; a fair trade for both ; and it just squares my upland. Half-a-dozen years hence, if I've any luck, it'll be the finest — ”

The silent side is fragmentary ; a man doesn't think on in a straight line through a mile-long chapter ; neither does he think all on one thread. Richard Hathaway was a good farmer, and a stirring man ; all the more is it proof of his great kindness that he could stay, as he called it “putter-kooing” here.

Anstiss Dolbeare remembers what came next.

CHAPTER V.

JASPER.

WHAT a new living it was to me all at once when they let me go out to the Farm, that winter! Uncle Royle and the doctor and the Hathaways managed it. Aunt Ildy didn't really object; but she went round with that way of hers that seemed to be saying all the time, "Oh, yes; you've contrived!" It made me have a mean, guilty feeling all the time she was packing up my things, as if I'd stolen her cake, or something.

She always thought I contrived. I did ask her for things sometimes, when Uncle Royle was in the room. I saved up my asking till he was there, when I wanted anything very much indeed; and I suppose this was contriving; but I always asked her; and I never went to him after she had said no. I don't know but most people would put an umbrella up, if they had one, when it was likely to rain. I forgot the umbrella often enough, however, for many a sprinkle to dampen my best things.

It was as if I had died and gone to heaven, almost.

The air was so soft that afternoon, with the softness that comes in a south wind over the snow; so tender, so promising of the warmth waiting somewhere, and coming by and by. In an air like that, you can seem to smell the very blue of the sky, and the pure sweetness of the river water; there are no flowers, or grass, or leaves; so where else can the pleasantness come from?

I was almost too warm, wrapped up in the big buffaloes; and Mrs. Hathaway had sent her foot-stove, besides. Richard did not tell me that till we drove off. Aunt Ildy had a foot-stove too, and there was a soapstone that she kept in the oven; but she had not thought of them, and it was better not

to say anything. I should never have thought of Aunt Ildy's foot-stove being warmed up for me. He just tucked it under my feet after we started. I suppose he got hot coals out of the office before I came downstairs. Richard Hathaway always thought of everything.

He asked me if I thought I could be contented. He told me of the things that we could do in the evenings; he had made a fox-and-geese board for me, with morrice on the other side. I didn't know morrice, but he would show me; and we would pop corn, and roast great sweet apples, and make candy such as that Mrs. Hathaway sent me. He would crack the nuts, and I should pick them out, while Mrs. Hathaway would stir the molasses and sugar. And the Kilhams would come over and take tea, and we would play games. I was not to think nor to study; but just to be "as little a girl as I could," he said.

I felt like such a little girl while he was talking! Such a little girl as I had never, really, been. I believe there is something childish in me now that can go back to that, if ever anybody makes much of me, I had so little of it when I was small. I have noticed that in myself, always; that the feelings and wants that got least answered in the time of them kept freshest into the later years; always ready to live their life and take their good whenever it could come. I think it may be so, on beyond the grave. I think that some of our disappointed longings keep us fresh for what waits for us there.

Something simple and sweet touches and fills me, thinking of those days, and that coming to the Hathaways. I can only say over to myself the things that I remember then, in the very easiest and most unpretending words, as a child would.

Mrs. Hathaway kissed me when she lifted me out on the door-stone. Nobody ever kissed me at home. Uncle Royle never thought of it, and Aunt Ildy didn't approve of kissing. She thought people could show their love in better ways. Sometimes, when I had been very sorry for some naughtiness, and meant truly to be good, and thought if I only had been always good Aunt Ildy might have loved me, for that she was a good woman, and said she always loved what deserved it,— when

I wanted so to creep into a little corner of her heart, seeing that if I hadn't her I hadn't anybody, and to be allowed at least to care for her,—I would do something, some very disagreeable and tedious thing perhaps, that she had given me, very nicely and patiently, and be very gentle and mindful all day; and then at night I would go up to her and put my arms round her, and kiss *her*. She would let me do this, at such times; and it made me very happy. I don't remember her ever kissing me back.

But Mrs. Hathaway kissed me on both cheeks, and then she took me through the hall and the breakfast-room, to a little room I never remembered seeing before, just beside the kitchen and opening into it. Such a dear little place! A low window looking right out on to a bank where the white snow lay then; but the green grass would be in summer, and the sunset streaming in; a shining yellow floor, and a strip of warm carpet in the middle; a little flounced corner toilet-table, and a wash-stand, with what looked like a basket and a vase of roses to wash out of and to hold the water; hooks to hang my clothes on, and a door each way,—into the kitchen and her chamber.

"You won't mind my coming through," she said. "And the kitchen makes it warm."

"*Everything* makes it warm!" I couldn't help answering, just so; and I turned round and put up my face to kiss her again. Somehow, one always knows when one may do that. I have often thought of it; it is as if the kiss were waiting.

She had made it so beautiful for me! If it were only just not a visit, but I could live there always. There was just that pain in it. It was not really *my* life; but more like the afternoons I spent with the Edgells, only greater; a piece *lent* me out of other people's lives.

I remember how piercing cold it was next morning. Down came the wind from the north-west,—from the polar plains, and the frozen lakes, and the great, bleak mountain ridges, whose peaks are always radiating off the warmth of the earth's heart into space, and down whose sides rush the fierce blasts that come out of the chill and emptiness, angry at the comfort

that nestles about sheltered human homes, to howl and shriek at it and rend it away. Only a little corner, here and there, can they touch and lift, though, showing so the deep, safe soul and glow of it, in homes like Hathaway Farmhouse.

I remember how Richard came in to the breakfast-room, rubbing his hands, from his early visit to the barns and the cattle; and how we heard Jabez stamping and puffing into the kitchen; how the coffee steamed, and how the sun sparkled in through the frosted windows; how the old cat stretched by the fire, and the great logs crackled and hissed out froth and steam at their ends, and my forehead and cheeks burned as I sat in the low chair in the corner.

"Not a bit in the way," Mrs. Hathaway said, when I asked her. I couldn't help feeling as if I ought to move though, and making little involuntary stirs every time she came near. I was so used to it with Aunt Ildy. She always wanted something just where I was, or to poke the fire, or brush the hearth, or I was started off upon an errand to the kitchen, or she had seen something of mine lying about; and it was,— "There are your books, Anstiss, on the kitchen table;" or, "Your coat's down, in the corner behind the entry door;" or, "You haven't taken the bedclothes off and opened the window." Nobody can tell what a rest it was to me, when I did get used to it a little, to feel that I might sit still sometimes and not be routed out.

Mrs. Hathaway and Aunt Ildy were both good house-keepers; but this was the difference between them. Everything got done at the farm, as regularly as at Uncle Royle's, only nobody was put out. Mrs. Hathaway did not hesitate to make me of use in little ways; but somehow it never interfered. It made Aunt Ildy restless,—in her conscience, I verily believe,—only to see a person reading a book, or warming their feet, or sitting at a window to watch the sunset,—so long as she could possibly find anything for them to do. I never could help thinking of her when I read in the Bible of Martha of Bethany. I have wondered, since I have been older, if it might not have been just that *uncomfortableness* that the Lord rebuked in her.

It was such pretty work to put the little press-chamber straight! I wished so I might ever have a little place like that all to myself, at home; and I thought over what little inventions of adornment I might dare to introduce, if I should.

We made cake that morning,—Mrs. Hathaway and I. She expected some young folks to tea, she said, the next night. She gave me the pleasant parts. I beat up the whites of the eggs while she did the yolks. At home, I always had to beat the yolks. Martha stirred the butter and sugar; and then the beautiful silver and gold of the eggs were added, and Mrs. Hathaway put the great wooden spoon into my hand, and asked me to “toss it together while she could see to the flour,” that was not quite cool from the drying. I cut up the citron while she beat the heavier mixture of the whole. “Take a little toll, Nansie, if you like,” she told me. “I can’t cut up citron without a bit in my mouth.” It didn’t seem like work; it was clear play.

In the afternoon, Richard came in early. He showed me morrice before tea; and we played in the firelight till I could beat him, making a whip-row every time. I felt afraid we should use up everything in one day, I was having such a good time.

But there was always something new, or something that did not use up. Richard found me “Gulliver’s Travels,” and “Baron Munchausen.” I read these in the mornings, when Mrs. Hathaway was busy with things I could not help her in. The Kilhams came to tea the second night; and we played old-fashioned games of cards: “Lend me your bundle, neighbor,” and “Old Maid.” How they all laughed when Richard Hathaway was left Old Maid! But then he made up such funny faces when he got the queen; everybody always knew where she was. Yes,—I do feel like a child again, thinking these things over. In the light of all that has happened since, I go back to them with something besides that simpleness; they seem sacred to me.

We had a party one night, at last,—a real country party. The great sitting-room and the best parlor were lighted up, with wood-fires and candles in the old silver branches under

the round mirrors ; and the stove in the hall was almost red-hot ; but it had a high sheet-iron fender round it, and we danced reels, and played "Blind-man's Buff," and "Still Palm," and "I had as many wives," and forfeits. I had to "bow to the wittiest, kneel to the prettiest, and kiss the one I loved best." So I bowed to Jeffrey Freeman,—he was the funny young man of the neighborhood ; he joked till nobody ever suspected him of being in earnest ; they said that was the reason he never got married ; he said it was the reason he hadn't been a minister.

There was no doubt about the prettiest. Lucy Kilham was like a wild rose, so simple and bright and delicate.

There was not much question as to the loving best ; I looked about for dear Mrs. Hathaway ; but she was not in the hall. She had gone to see after the "treat" which was being laid out in the breakfast-room, thence to be brought out and handed round at half-past nine. I stopped then, and hesitated. Only for a minute though. Richard stood against the parlor door, and I met his eye, watching me with the old, kind gladness ; glad to see me bright and happy, I knew.

I walked somewhat slowly, over toward him ; I could not help so far signifying him ; but I was not quite sure, even when I came to him, whether I would do more. I was only thirteen, and I thought no harm ; if I had been more used to home-caressing, I should have scarcely felt an awkwardness, for there had been plenty of merry kissing-penalties all through the game ; I paused and looked up at him, and he bent his head down — then I reached up to him and just touched his cheek. He did not kiss me back ; indeed, I did not give him time ; there was a flush in his face as he raised it again, and I was afraid, for a second, that he did not like what I had done ; but he kept hold of my hand which he had taken, and drew me to a place beside him against the wall ; and I saw in his eyes and about his lips the look that I never saw in any man's face but Richard Hathaway's, — a look that he had when he was moved, — a sort of large, tender shining from under lids a little lifted, and a curve of the mouth that went with that, betraying a heart-stir hidden and quiet, but very strong.

He looked like that sometimes when his mother praised him, or when he heard of some grand happening or doing ; or if any soul, or any creature, showed a love or gratitude for him when he had given a help or soothed a pain. I have seen him look like that upon a little child, too small to speak, that stretched its arms to him ; I have seen him look like that upon a sick woman to whose side he had come, tenderly ; it was a spirit great to very gentleness that so revealed itself ; they were moments when he showed noblest. If I could have thought of him so always, in those years that came on after ! But he was silent ; homely in his ordinary ways ; content with simple, common things ; and I was full of dreams.

I think Mrs. Hathaway always liked Lucy Kilham. I noticed that night how she spoke to her in a different way, kind as she was, from her kindness to anybody else ; and how she looked at Richard and at her when it was Richard's turn to redeem a forfeit by and by, and he had to do the same thing that I had done. He bowed to Lucy, of course ; everybody did ; I wondered if Mrs. Hathaway thought of anything else ; and then he went and gave the kiss to his mother. I thought she looked somehow as if she only took it to keep safely for a while.

I felt how nice it was to be pretty, like Lucy. I would rather, I thought, have had a face like hers than anything else in the world. There are many different types of women's beauty ; I had not learned then, to read or to discern them all ; and Lucy Kilham's was at that time, and for years, my ideal. It was of the same, and yet not really at all like Augusta Hare's. Augusta's was more conscious, and animated, and coquettish ; she knew better how to show off her gift. Lucy just *was* pretty. Wherever she stood or sat, there was the light of the room ; to my thought, she was the *party* ; the rest were only the *people*. Her brown hair, lying in a soft curve along the fair broad brow and temples, and tucked off carelessly over the small ear ; her large, gray-hazel eyes with the dark lashes and the straight, slender pencilling above them ; the little dimpled knitting of the forehead that was a habit, and gave her a sort of tender, half-troubled look ; the straight, deli-

cate nose ; the mouth, so perfectly imprinted and so sweetly set, its corners tucking themselves away in dimples when she smiled or spoke, and showing the little unobtrusive white teeth that met each other with such a charm of exactness and cosey closeness (Mrs. Hathaway said her mouth and chin were like nothing but a fresh-made butter-pat),—these made me look and follow her till I forgot I might be staring ; they made me wonder, envyingly, what it would seem like to look like that ; to brush that beautiful dark hair that could not go amiss over such a clear, lovely forehead, and to talk and laugh with such bewitching furnishings as hers.

I can think now, just how I looked that night in the corner glass, when I went to undress in the press-chamber. I took especial notice, for I wanted to find out. What I did see, I know now was a face pretty enough in its own way, though I slighted it so utterly in my opinion then, possessed with but one conception. Round, and flushed to a bright rosiness with excitement and fast-returning health ; the eyes blue and intense from a fire within, and the color that like the bloom of art heightened their effect ; hair soft and shining, tossed about to a light fulness out of the set lines in which it would not stay,—all this I saw, and only perceived that it was not a bit like the sweet regularity and wonderful fairness that had so captivated me. The nose turned up a little, and the mouth was too undefined. I tried to accomplish the little pucker between the brows that Lucy Kilham had ; but my first essay at expression-practising disheartened me. It didn't suit with the rest ; and, besides that, I didn't see how she made it stay. I came to the conclusion that I was frightfully ugly, and blew out my light and undressed in the dark.

It was not for what beauty could do for me ; I wanted nothing of it except itself ; but everything was so common with me !

Well, after all, one could be but common, and yet have a bright, good time. I reconciled myself to that, made my dress especially trig and tidy, and went into the briskness and business of Thanksgiving preparation with my kind entertainer.

We all sat and stoned raisins together, for two or three evenings beforehand ; Mrs. Hathaway, Martha, Richard, and I. We each had a plate and a knitting-needle, and the two dishes of fruit, stoned and unstoned, stood midway in the round table, accessible to all.

Then there was citron to slice again ; and lemon-peel to shave, and to cut into the minutest shreds with small, bright scissors. Richard shaved it, and I took the thin, curling, fragrant rings as they fell from his fingers, and snipped them up.

How nice the things looked, all sorted out in the pantry ! I felt a little tender self-reproach, thinking of Aunt Ildy working all alone. She *had* been good to let me come ; when I got back I would try and be a better girl.

Richard's married sister and her husband and children came that year all the way from Schenectady ; and his brother John came home from somewhere beyond in New York State. John was going to be married out there ; after this, his Thanksgivings would be divided, and rarer yet in Broad-fields.

I helped Mrs. Hathaway bring down the linen to be aired ; and I counted over the best napkins, and rubbed the silver ; I dusted the spare rooms, and laid out towels, and filled the pitchers. We did all this, and laid the table in the long sitting-room, the day before. The pies were baked, and plum-puddings ready, and all were ranged in goodly show upon the shelves ; and the whole hall, into which the pantry opened, was redolent with sweet, rich odors. "Spicy breezes" Richard called them ; and he went about singing the second verse of the Missionary Hymn.

I myself had rolled out and filled the mince turnovers for the children, and printed the edges with a little key. I felt so housewifely and blithe ; I found that there were really many good things that one could do and be, if nothing especial had come to one in the way of a fair face or a rare fortune. I was here in the way of a true healthiness of living.

Mrs. Kingsdon arrived, with Mr. Kingsdon and the children. I went upstairs with the little ones, and helped to put them

to bed in the south-west room, where I had suffered my punishment last summer. There was a fire blazing there now, and the shutters were all fast closed. The shadows from the fire-light danced over the ceiling, and the large white bed and the little trundle-bed were luminous with their fresh pillows and coverlets.

I think a fire upstairs is such an especially pleasant thing. It is associated for me with rare indulgence; times of mild measles and moderate hooping-cough, when my room was warmed and brightened so, and I lay in the twilights and the evenings with the cheer about me, feeling a sweet rest, and watching Lucretia as she would sit with her knitting-work in her rocking-chair by the hearth, casting a grotesque figure and motion all across the ceiling with her shadow as she vibrated to and fro, plying the slender implements that magnified to huge beams and battering rams and made most awful threats and passes overhead.

I shaped rabbits and sheep and foxes for the children with my fingers, and made them leap, and nibble, and snap great jaws upon the wall. I pretended to lose little sancy Jimmy, who squatted in his scrap of flannel shirt in the farthest corner, his pudsy hands upon his dimpled knees, and shrieked with laughter when I passed him by. They wanted "something put beside their beds," and I went downstairs and brought back small, round, sugared cakes that had been baked on purpose. They looked at them, and laid them down in perfect content and loftiest honor, not to be touched till they had truly been asleep, and said their prayers, and tried to shut their little winking, wakeful eyes, and keep them so.

I left them then, as Mrs. Kingsdon had told me. In the morning, by daylight, she said, they were all astir, and nibbling like little mice.

When I could no longer do anything for these little creatures, I stood aside, and half wished that I were but one of them; one of a family, with all the happy growing-up before me. Next to that, I would have liked to be their older sister. I was only thirteen, and it never occurred to me to think of

motherhood to such ; nevertheless, I believe that, even, may have been, unconsciously in my heart.

Afterward came quiet days by ourselves ; and the time drew toward the end of my stay at Broadfields.

I remember the afternoons, when Mrs. Hathaway, in her brown merino gown, and white bobbinet neckerchief, with the large gold beads — the heir-loom from mother to daughter in so many New England country families — around her throat, would sit by the little room window with her knitting-work, or the weekly newspaper which she read in bits and over and over for secular literature ; and the Sundays, when, in black silk and best cap, she would sit in the same place, and the reading would be a chapter or two in the great family Bible laid across her knees. She would give me at the same time a large-print Testament, and I would turn it over to my favorite places in Revelation, and read about the heavenly city.

The little-room window looked to the east ; Mrs. Hathaway's room and the press-chamber were in the kitchen L, and on the western side. There was the early sun to breakfast in, and the last twilight to go to bed with, or to follow. It is a good and a cheery thing so to travel with the day.

But I liked the looking out eastward for a while in the late afternoon light, also. There was the bare top of Red Hill right over against us, and it took its color from the gorgeousness opposite ; and the clouds above it were deeply crimson and tenderly pink before they settled into the evening gray.

There was jasper on Red Hill, from which it had its name. I was asking Richard about it the last Sunday evening before I went away. I had never seen any jasper ; and it seemed to me something wonderful that the stone, which is the lower foundation of the holy Jerusalem, should be found in fragments there, close by us, on Red Hill. I knew these words and names were emblems ; still it gave me a feeling as if Red Hill must be mysteriously near to heaven.

"I have a piece upstairs, polished," Richard said, when I had told him this ; and he went and brought it for me. It was an irregular oval ; smooth, flat on one side, and rising to a

cone-like ridge upon the other ; of a deep, rich red, made bright with the perfect gloss to which it had been brought. I held it in my hands with pleasure.

Presently, I turned to my Testament, and read over the stones aloud, naming their colors. I had found them out by asking, and by searching in a dictionary of minerals at school. I had thought them over and imaged them to myself till I knew them by heart, and, inwardly, by sight.

"Jasper, crimson ; sapphire, blue ; chalcedony, pure, lustrous, waxy white ; emerald, deep, full green ; sardonyx, red sardius and white chalcedony in turn ; sardius, blood-red ; chrysolite, clear, transparent green ; beryl, pale blue ; topaz, yellow ; chrysoprase, bright leek-green ; jacinth, purple ; amethyst, violet."

"That is the way they go," I said to Richard, in a child's homely phrase, but feeling a great beauty as I spoke. From this darkest, up through all others to violet,—just like the rainbow. What do colors mean, Richard? In the beginning of the Bible is the rainbow ; that is the covenant ; and here at the end is the rainbow of precious stones ; the solid one ; the wall of the holy Jerusalem. And the gates are pearls, pure white."

"Nobody knows what it means," said Richard.

"But it *does* mean," I persisted. "They wouldn't be called by names of things we know if we weren't to find out."

"It's just a description ; nobody understands it," Richard repeated, vaguely.

"Don't you *care*?" I asked, impatiently.

"I care most for things that are plain and real ; I think that's the best way," he answered. "You may keep the jasper, Nansie ; next summer we'll go up Red Hill and get more."

I was disappointed with Richard. This was one of the ends at which he always stopped. He could help me so in common things ; he could make everything so pleasant to me ; but he would not help me think.

I shut up the Testament, and turned away to the window, looking up at Red Hill ; and I would not say any more. I forgot to thank him even, for the jasper. I dare say he was

dissatisfied too, thinking me visionary and fantastic. He always seemed afraid of that for me.

Mrs. Hathaway had taken off her spectacles while we talked, and sat looking over at us. She could see both our faces.

"O you foolish children!" she said, in a sort of loving, pitiful way. "One begins backwards, and the other doesn't begin at all,—by appointed means. The way to Revelation is all through Matthew and Mark, Luke and John. When you've *done* all that, then you'll come to the jasper walls and the gates of pearl."

She was always anxious, religiously, about Richard; the more, I believe, because he was by nature so good already. She had been taught to believe that a sweet nature might even hinder grace. "To enter in by the door into the sheep-fold,"—that, in her understanding of it, was what she always longed for in his behalf.

I looked round, and Richard smiled. Something pleased, or amused, him in his mother's speech; her calling us both children alike, I think, when he was one-and-twenty, and I just entered into my teens.

"Come, Nansie," he said; "put on your rubbers and wraps, and we'll carry some milk to the kittens in the barn." He never forgot a want that he could answer; and he was always nobly patient; I think, now, that these had something to do with Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, whether of a purpose or not. But I went with him that night, only half pleased.

I wished so I could have somebody to talk to; to say my fancies out to, and have them reasoned into something—or nothing. I could not do it with Mrs. Hathaway; not upon these subjects; with her there was only one question to be asked, anxiously and first. Perhaps I was coming—being led—to it, though it were backward even. There is one Door; but they come from the east and the west, the north and the south, to sit down in the kingdom.

CHAPTER VI.

A THREAD BROUGHT UP.

FROM farther back and away off.

Up into New Hampshire, to a little human home upon first principles ; to a very beginning of things we must come, to find the starting-point of that which grows to be an element, pretty soon, in these lives with which we have to do.

It was under a wild hill, in a little red house, with no other near,—only a scrap of clearing in front, down to the river, where a bit of one-handed farming was done ; and a peep of far-off roofs between the distant slopes of the long, deep valley. Here, once upon a time, there lived as happy a young couple as any in all the State.

Nothing on earth to worry them ; nothing to lose ; little to want ; everything in life to look for and to gain. Working up ; beginning a long way down, but feeling the great joy of the beginning ; strong and cheery, both of them ; their very pulses one with the great pulse of nature about them ; something of the mountain and the river taken, day by day, into the spirit, and sent forth in act ; they grew, as it were, to the color of their abode and nourishing, as a woodpecker grows to the gray of a tree-trunk, and the katydid is brilliant with the green of the leafage.

They came here out of the village together. George Devine had got the help of stalwart friends, and raised his house-frame ; and with a job hired irregularly, now and again, had boarded it in and shingled it, mainly with his own hands. Persis wove her own sheets and pillow-cases ; “hired out” for a winter, and bought a best gown and a new bonnet and a tea-set ; and they were married on a June day, and came home to pick wild strawberries on the hill-side, and make a johnny-cake

for supper ; and to feel just as well off, and a great deal better able to take in the full content of it all, than if they had had a hundred weight of silver to bring with them and to be beholden to fashionable friends for, and a grand reception to give next week.

The birds and the river serenaded them ; tame little red squirrels came and made morning calls upon them ; and in the twilights and on the Sundays, friends walked up the wood-path between great oaks and beeches, — a grand approach, such as men, with monstrous outlay, make over again to their dwellings, where, with equal outlay, the old glory has been laid low ; and the young men talked of their farms and their oxen, of training-days and elections ; and the women of their bedquilts and their butter, their new gowns and the village news ; some of them of their babies.

All this was more than twenty years before.

Summer and winter went by, and spring came, tender-footed, over the hills, and summer was near again. Something else was near. Something that made the young wife happy in the bright mornings, — the brave morning-times when soul and body wake together, strong for whatever may be to do or to bear, — and fearful with a tremble and a foreboding, when the nights shut down and cut them off with gloom and silence from the village two miles away. Nobody nearer than those two miles, — mother, doctor, or friend, — whatever might happen before daylight. Only a forest bridle and foot-path between.

“ It will all come right,” said cheery George Devine.

And one glad, sweet, perfumy morning, it did come right. George walked and ran the two miles in twenty minutes, got to the village at “ sun-up,” and home again just as the golden light fell full from over the mountain-top, like a promise, upon his roof-trée ; the country doctor followed on Crab, with his saddle-bags, close after ; and then the mother, never minding the two miles afoot, with all her fifty years and growing, comely weight. And into the small home came the pain and the peril and the joy that are the same in palace and cabin, and

by equal chrism and crown make every woman, who so suffers and receives, a queen.

They called the baby by a quaint old name in which their exultation spoke itself,—Rejoice. They never thought of anything but joy in her from that day onward, when they named her so. In their love and gladness, they arrogated fate to their desire.

All that happy summer through of her young motherhood, Persis did her small, neat house-keeping, with her baby in the cradle or upon her arm; but when summer came again, George had to put a wooden slide across the door to shut the little one in from all the great, dangerous world, that began for her from just outside that threshold; for the tiny feet had grown restless, and strong, and wilful; and the bit, bright face looked over at him, and the wee hands clapped and beckoned when he came up from his work, and out on the doorstone he would stop, deferring his delight, to pick up spoon and rattle and clothes-pin and string of buttons, and the half-dozen other homely toys of which the busy mother had made temporary beguilements and that the child had flung away; and last of all would gather up his child, with a strong rapture, and hold her to his lips and heart. The old beautiful story of a baby-hood, always, whatever comes of it afterward!

“By and by,—when she can run and meet me!” he would say.

“By and by,—when she can play on the flat rock, and set out acorn-cups and bits of moss, and keep a little house, as I did once!”

“And when the farm grows, and I stay in the fields all day, and she can come and bring my dinner to me!”

“She will have the young girls from the village, one of these days, to walk in the pine woods; and get flowers and berries, and come home to tea.”

“She will have a sweetheart, maybe, to walk and talk there with her, as I walked and talked with you.”

Persis would stop there; the mother does not go beyond this, with her “by and by.”

And as yet the child was just their little, bright Rejoice ; and the future was all hid.

Ten or twelve years went by ; and there was no other little one ; indeed, the mother said that this was well. They called her Joyce, now ; names get shortened so ; and somehow they grew sad when they remembered how they had first christened her.

She gave them trouble ; they no longer said “ by and by.” The father looked in the mother’s anxious face when he came in, to read what new pain the wilful, wayward little girl had given ; and they lay awake and talked at nights of what they should do to rule and win her. For she was of a strange temper, that would neither be ruled nor won ; passionate, discontented; headstrong ; heedless of duty and of love ; bent only upon selfish end and pleasure. She opened great, saucy eyes when her father reasoned, or her mother pleaded ; she defied restriction, bore punishment doggedly, and reiterated offence. Idle and wild, she gathered about her, instead of the sweet young companionship her mother had pictured, the truants and the ne’er-do-wells of the village ; she would escape and be off with them whole long mornings. Persis Devine’s heart ached when she thought, now, of the by and by. God’s by and by is long ; that is the only comfort.

At fourteen, Joyce ran away, with a girl four years her elder. Bewitched with stories of factory life, tired of her quiet home, she made up a bundle of her clothes, took a little money, and went off, down to where mills were building and cotton spinning, on the Merrimac. George Devine went after her, and brought her back. It was only a fruitless, ill-conceived, child’s attempt ; but it half broke the hearts that had so built upon her.

In the midst of all this trouble, came to them — a strange late gift — another little one. Pure, and sweet, and lovely, as the first had been ; to grow, perhaps, — God knew whether, — into another pain for them.

“ He could not *let* it be so,” the poor mother said ; and trembling inwardly, pleading and praying, assuming nothing, now, she called it Hope.

When Hope was three years old, the father died.

Then Joyce could not be restrained. She must earn money now, she said ; and indeed there was need of it ; so she went down to the mills. She cried when she said good-by at last, holding her little sister in her arms. The one tenderness in her nature had awakened for her. In these three years she had seemed to soften somewhat, and at times to be even steady and thoughtful ; there was a chance yet, Persis thought ; so with good, motherly counsel, and kisses and prayers, she let her go.

From the mills, Joyce went to the great city beyond ; to learn a trade, she said, and make her fortune. She came home now and then, wearing fine clothes ; a bonnet with French flowers ; a silk dress and an embroidered shawl ; and she gave her mother money. She would have Hope with her, by and by, she said ; she petted the child, and brought her pretty keepsakes.

When Hope was seven the neighbors sent for Joyce ; the mother was ill of a fever ; Joyce hardly got there for the end. And then the two were orphans.

The neighbors could not interfere ; but they hardly liked the look of the thing, when Joyce took Hope and went away. Something coarser in the girl's face ; something meaner even in the dress, mixed yet with a tawdry smartness, as she had come among them (she had put on a black bonnet, and a black shawl and gown of her mother's now, to go back in), — indicated, even to these unsophisticated country-folk, a step downward, somehow ; they were "afraid she wasn't making out so terrible well, after all."

And then there came a gap which it needs not to fill up ; a changing and wandering of these two, from place to place, still hand in hand ; for, erring and unfit as she was, Joyce loved the child, and Hope was innocent and trusting.

Joyce's face grew coarse ; she was "queer" and ill, now and then ; when these times came, Hope just stayed by and waited.

"Whiles" as the Scotch say, they would go together into service ; Joyce was capable, and would work well for a space ;

and Hope was bright and quick for errands and small chores.

Then they would live in some bit of a room together, "house-keeping,"—Joyce getting work at her trade, in a shop; they had strange neighbors and strange company, often, and Joyce went and came at extraordinary hours; but she was kind and loving to the little sister,—careful of her, in a certain fashion, amid all her recklessness; *that* and her young childhood and her simpleness, and some peculiar inherent quality of her own little life, hard to define, only possible now and then, in a heaven-sunned nature like hers to discern, saved Hope. She was like a pure little blossom that lifts its delicate head sometimes, out of a handful of sweet, natural earth, kept by some blind love or instinct in the midst of grimness and foulness, and all that shrouds and shuts out nature.

That does not tell it either. A shaft of divine light ran athwart and through this child's spiritual being, that lit up itself and the air about it; that even illumined the motes therein that were really of the dust and refuse, and turned them into starry sparkles. She made her own little bright spot at once; she made friends who turned toward her the side that was capable of ripening to any sweetness, even among the very castaways with whom her wretched outer living brought her in innocent and unsuspecting contact. She was never frightened, never lonely; she sang little nursery songs to herself by hours, when Joyce left her; when a change came,—as always did come to whatever temporary plan or abiding they might make,—through a fit of temper, or a whim, or the "queerness" on the one hand, or an impulse to better things, as it might be, on the other, with poor Joyce,—she set off blithe and trusting again; always looking for the good that they were surely going to; seeking the fortune that infallibly lay beyond.

She told Joyce stories, in her cunning little way; half of memory, half of her own sweet, childish fancy, about sisters like them who went out into the wide world and came to wonderful luck. She mixed up the little she had been taught about God's providence with this; and it was "the good God"

who was to bring them out of every perplexity and lead them to the beautiful end. This force of an opposite drawing it was that persuaded Joyce's vibrating life to its better extreme; that attracted her to a quiet and respectable living; that brought her sometimes, and so Hope, into a purer atmosphere. Out of this Hope gathered, by angelic assimilation, the good and the brightness and the fragmentary truth which she carried into the darker alternations; as if the day might treasure up and secrete particles of its sunlight against the turning away toward the sunless void.

She asked her sister once what her name meant. She understood her own and it was beautiful. "Joyce" must mean something.

"I lost the beginning of my name, long ago," Joyce answered bitterly. "When I was little, they called me Rejoice. It will never be put together again. Never call me so!" she added, with an almost angry impetuosity.

"God could put it together," said Hope, confidently. "I shall call you 'Re,' to save the two halves, and keep Him in mind."

So, after that, she always did.

But poor Joyee's name and life were alike in two distracted halves. And for two years more it went on so, till Hope was nine. Then — they had been in the farthest gloom for months — the end came.

A pitiful sight in a city street one day, — far off, as they measured distance then, from the scene of Joyce Devine's first venture after fortune, — gathered a gradual crowd.

A woman sitting on the damp sidewalk, leaning back in a sheltering angle of the brick wall; a pale, distorted face, that ought to have been young, but that never would be young again; swollen, changed, from what it must have been a little while ago, — stupid, senseless; the eyes half shut, the jaw falling; an old bonnet crushed down upon the forehead; a thin, torn, dirty calico gown, and a miserable shawl that hid and helped nothing; feet thrust out, unsightly, in broken and down-trodden shoes. Beside this, a little girl standing waiting. No surprise, no perplexity even, in her face; only a

patient look that was hardly sad, rather sure and expectant, though a little weary,—a something through the patience which said it would be better with them soon,—she had only to wait.

She moved before the other a little, when people came by, and glanced and lingered; she drew the old shawl over her sister's bosom when the wind, or some half-conscious motion, stirred it; she said, "It was no matter,—Joyce was queer like that sometimes," when any one questioned; but all the while Joyce grew strangely queerer.

There was no omnipresent police in those days; a good many persons, one after another, half paused, and then went on, none of them being that "somebody" who is always to take care, at last, of that which does not eventually take care of itself; but presently they would no longer go by; they stopped and gathered; they said the constable must be sent for, and she must be carried somewhere.

"Please let her be," Hope said; "she will be better by and by, and we will go home."

She stood with her hand on Joyce's shoulder; the other arm held across her breast, keeping the old shawl on; somehow no one liked to meddle forcibly, or take the child away; there was an impalpable shield of privacy about her as she stood there in her patient trouble in the open street, as if close walls and shuttered windows had covered her in; she looked so surprised that any should persistently intrude; it was her business, and she knew so well.

But Joyce grew queerer—paler; the slight occasional movements ceased; there was no longer the expiration of slow, audible breath; she lay very still, and the head fell further forward.

A man just come up, pressed through the crowd, and got a single look; then he laid his hand upon her bonnet and lifted it away.

"Let her be," said Hope, reiterating her old words in a tired way; "she will be better soon."

"She *is* better," said the man. "She *is* just dead."

Hope looked at him as if she could not comprehend either

the fact, or how he dared to utter it. "Dead?" she repeated, as if she spoke after him a word in some strange language.

"She is dead; of heart disease and — inebriation."

He was a doctor, and he could read the signs; but he looked in that child's pure, amazed face, and he could not use a harsher, commoner word.

This then was the end of it all; of the young wife's fears and gladness; of the home-building and the looking-for, the pain, and the joy, and the pride; of the sister-love, and the fortune-seeking together. This was the whole history and out-come of it.

Was it?

There is never an end; it is always a going on; and God's mercy is beyond, always. In the infinitude of that, Joyce may have found, somewhere, before now, the old, lost syllable of her name.

Meanwhile, there was at that moment only this, the seeming end: the dead girl in the streets; the gathering crowd; the doctor; presently the coroner, the bearing away, the inquest; and little Hope left alone in the world.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE OF THESE DAYS.

THERE were two places in the city, to one of which Hope would have to be taken,—the almshouse, or a more special charity, the Female House of Industry, and Asylum for the Indigent. It was to this latter, and to the former division of it, that she was brought.

They put on her a dark blue gown and a brown linen apron, and merged her in the routine and duty of the establishment. They told her God had taken her sister, and that this was to be her home. They were kind to her; I have no tale of horrors to relate. Only it was routine and rule, and keeping to hours and work.

She grieved, in a tender way, for Joyce; but she had great faith, in her small, unlearned fashion. God had taken her; she gave her up to him. She could wait; she had waited a great many times before. God would take her, sometime, too.

There was a school for the children in this House of Industry; three hours for simple lessons in reading, writing, and numbers; some of the oldest ones studied Geography. After that, they did, in different departments, various small, tedious work; all sameness of work is tedious to children. They picked hair for mattresses, which the women made over or made up; they sewed patchwork for quilts; they hemmed towels; they braided mats; they went into the laundry and learned to do ruffles on ruffling irons, or they turned crimping machines. They had half hours, at different times in the day, for play.

Next door to the asylum was a building in which was also a children's school; the yard in which these children played was divided by a high fence from the other. From the win-

dows in the passages above, the little charity-folks in their straight blue gowns and Holland aprons, could look over upon these groups of little ones who came from homes ; who had an individuality, and wore, some of them dresses of blue, some of pink, some of green or white.

Hope watched their games and caught the clue to them ; then she and her companions repeated them in the asylum yard. Children's pleasures are made up of a thousand little imaginations and interpretings that are incomprehensible to their elders, except as they look back on their own childhood ; and this some of us have either not the power to do, or have lost the habit. There is such a thing as a genius for retrospection. If it were not for such intangible and perhaps absurd imaginings and associations, where would be the charm of nine-tenths of the children's games ? They are types and suggestions to them of great, unconscious meanings. In the after years we unravel some of these which were vaguely beautiful in their time, if so be, indeed, we have that retrospective genius which can call them up in their vividness, and the insight that can analyze.

They played at " Bookbinder ; " where the sport consisted in successive trials of watchfulness and agility, by the placing of a book upon the closed and joined fists, manipulating about it with touches and approaches and feints of lifting, the end of which was, if it could be accomplished, a smart rap upon the knuckles too slow in withdrawing, or the fall of the book to the ground, which was just as bad. Between this little Scylla and Charybdis each child watched and waited eagerly, with alert, sparkling eyes ; every failure sent the defeated one down to the foot of the line ; she who held her place at the head for three rounds became Bookbinder.

There was great glee in the asylum yard the day this new game, borrowed from their neighbors, was inaugurated. Hope showed them how it was done, as usual ; they played with a small square bit of smooth board, left by some carpenter, and treasured up as a plaything ; they could not carry books away from the school-room. It was a grand excitement ; fun, they knew not why ; the truth was that to their child-na-

tures and ambitions it was all that the most earnest strivings are to men and women ; when life tries them with its ticklish opportunities ; when they watch and balance, and, seizing the right moment, may, by vigilance and quickness, succeed ; or too fearful, or too slow, may let fall everything, or get their knuckles rapped, and go down, disappointed, to the foot. If they can go up and stay up, after a while they begin to dispense chances and hold fates for others. It is only a bigger game that goes round so ; we are just like the children ; by our games, also, we are training faculties for the grasp of things yet more large and real, that we shall come to by and by.

Then there was one other chief amusement. In these bricked yards were wide borders, marked off by planks set edgewise, holding garden earth, in which grew shrubs and common flowers. The children tried in turn walking this narrow plank-edge from end to end. According to the distances they achieved without a slipping, they would rank themselves, keeping their place and number from day to day. There were differences in these wooden curbs ; some were inch-wide only, some gave double that for foothold ; so they had classes higher and lower ; being promoted from the head of one to the foot of another. What was this like but moral and intellectual mounting ? What was it more like than some holy Parable or Promise, even,—of narrow ways that lead to higher life, of small work well done, after which shall be given greater ? We live in allegory ; the very children in the market-place utter the truth hidden away in them ; they believe they are at play only ; but they can only play after the great human nature and expectation that lie latent and must urge outward.

So it does not take much, after all, of implement and form to make a life ; an alphabet holds a whole language, and all the books of it ; so there was not very much difference between the little girls in their blue gowns and the children in coats of many colors ; not much contrast between the going in to eat beans or porridge and unbuttered bread, or home to roasted chicken,—so that all was good of its kind, and they all got

enough of it; not much contrast between the patchwork-sewing in the matron's room, and the small stints in the nursery. By and up out of it all, came the little souls into some larger hope and knowledge; some faint signifying to themselves of things we all grope after but dimly. It is the great facts of our living, and not the signs of it, that matter; we may solve mathematical problems with chalk and a board; a poor woman may strive up toward order and beauty in her plain home, with only tin pans and rag-carpets to work with, instead of statuary and velvet; a small seller of tapes and buttons may learn the laws of demand and supply in a village which widen to the grand Economy of a Universe; we shall find out some time what we really have been studying, and we may come out more equal than we think.

Out of their few books, in like manner, these charity-children made as much, perhaps, as they could have done from profounder ones and more; what was not there they put in; this is what we all have to do. They learned to read and spell from the old lesson-books which told them things like these: "I am the sun. I am very bright. I rise every morning, and give light and heat to the world. I make the grass grow and the flowers bloom. If it were not for me, all things would die."—"I am the moon. My face is round. I shine at night when the sun is gone. You cannot look at the sun because he is too bright, but you can look at me, for my light is mild." Here and there a story,—of a disobedient rabbit who went into the field which his mother had forbidden him, thinking to eat fine parsley, but got poisonous hemlock instead; or an Esop's Fable; or some simple rhymes. These were to them the sublimity and fulness of description,—(they brought the things themselves to their thought, and what can sublimity and fulness do more?)—they were romance and tragedy, eclogue and epic. In these books they passed by nothing; not even the homely scrolls and devices which divided the sections and subjects; they made them over on their slates; a line—a curve—was a whole picture; everything meant something, only they could have scarcely told you what. No more can you tell what it is that you read in

the swell of a hill against the horizon, or the bend of a shore.

Hope read in “Barbauld’s Lessons ;” that is all Addison and Waverley for a child, as “Mother Goose” is Shakespeare. She soon got out of that as a lesson-book, and she could enter, in her way, into far larger things when she got hold of them ; simplicity and scope go strangely together with the young. She did not stagger at “Paradise Lost,” — you shall hear, presently, how she came by that, — but she never tired of the story of Charles, and his morning walk down the fields, and his stepping on board a vessel, in a truly spiritual way, without premeditation or encumbrment, and sailing over to France, and just strolling down through that country. France was only next door ; one could put on one’s cape bonnet and drop in there. One place opened to another, in that way, to her fancy ; everything was next door ; the world was large, but you could go on and on ; all ways led somewhere, and there was no knowing what pleasantness you might come to.

She had a basket or a bundle of clean linen, done in the laundry, to carry home sometimes ; the trustiest children did the errands of the house. Hope always found the place, and she was not gone too long ; yet she chose her ways of going, for all that.

The fine streets were near the river ; it was in this direction, and up the town, that she was ordinarily sent ; so she could come a long way homeward, often, following the water-side. She delighted in making out new turns ; it was like going journeys to traverse different squares, or take a new cross-street, and come out at fresh points. But the water was the unfailing charm ; something came to her, when she caught its sparkle, of the old dim pictures of her infancy when she lived in the little forest home. There was the wonder of whence it came and where it was going ; where the vessels went that she saw sail up and down ; which was France, and which New Hampshire, — for she had not regularly begun Geography yet, and the most she knew was by Barbauld and tradition.

There were wide openings between the scattered buildings on that side and the blue river-edge ; over across were long,

green, sloping hills. At one place, from a broad wooden wharf a little ferry-boat plied to and fro ; she wanted so to get in and go over in it, and climb up on the opposite shore to the crest of the high land, and see what there was beyond. She would run all the way to do her errand and to get back here, that she might have a little while to linger. One day she had leave for Barbara Graice to go with her. The scrupulous division of labor in this establishment seldom permitted two to be sent upon one errand. But Barbara ought to learn the way about ; Hope could not always go ; also Hope was a good and trustworthy child, and deserved an indulgence. So the matron said yes ; and hand in hand, as happy as two little royal highnesses, the two little pauper-orphans set forth together.

Hope liked Barbara because she was quiet, and would listen ; and Hope always had so much to tell ! They read stories together in their play-hours sometimes ; stories that Barbara Graice would never have sat down to read by herself, — she would rather have played at tag, the good of which was more apparent ; but with Hope's elocution and commentaries and enlargements they became enchanting.

Some good soul among the Lady Managers had given the blue-gowned children a year's volume of the "Juvenile Miscellany." Very good girls were allowed to take it of a Saturday afternoon. Hope worked grandly at her small, tedious tasks, and earned the reward often ; sometimes for an extra half hour that was not on a Saturday. Then she would find Barbara, and go and sit with her at the staircase window that overlooked the school-yard next door, and was crossed diagonally by the ascending steps, so that you had seat, and table, and footstool, if you wanted them, all at once, and the pleasant out-look besides.

They had in this volume the exciting history of "Catherine Bennet ; or, The Week's Probation." Also, "Susans' Visit to the Country :" how Catharine lost and kept her temper, and what befell and tempted her from day to day ; how she did not go to the party, but did go at last, to stay at her aunt's instead, where there was a "lawn" — whatever that was, — and a pond ;

how Susan travelled in the stage-coach, and fed the chickens, and went to church, and carried a green parasol ; these suggested worlds for the imagination to revel in ; and Hope could tell Barbara Graice a score of things more than were put down in the book.

“ Catharine had brown, curly hair, like that pretty girl that comes to the school to fetch her little sister ; and she wore a dark-red gown like hers, and a white ruffle in her neck ; and there was one little chicken at Susan’s grandmother’s that had a speckled breast and a white tail.”

“ How do you know ? ” says Barbara.

“ Why, I just think hard, and then I see ‘em. Shut your eyes and try.”

Then Barbara would shut her eyes, and see — exactly nothing.

“ I’ll ask Miss Hammond to let you go up to Tower Street with me to-morrow, with Mrs. Jameson’s basket, and coming home I’ll show you the country.”

“ Shall I have to shut my eyes ? Because I *can’t* see anything so, and I don’t see how you do it.”

“ No. It’s outside, and close by, almost. The other things are inside, you know, and a great way off, somehow.”

This was the way that it came about, and that they walked up to Tower Street hand to hand, and came back along the river.

It was a bright day, and the light sparkled on the little blue tips of the waves, and behind the green hills opposite, and overhead the sky was deep, and clear, and splendid.

“ *That’s* the country,” says Hope, in a magnificent way, as if she were showing some grand domain of her own, or a continent that she had discovered, — “ the real country.”

“ Where Susan went ? ”

“ Yes, only she went up a long road behind those hills, that leads away off, up and down, and over bridges, and past fields and ponds, and through dark woods, till at last you come to it, — a great white house with a green fence before it, and a swing in the garden ; and Susan’s grandmother has got a rose-bush in the window.”

" You never told me that before."

" I just noticed it," says Hope. " You can't see everything at once. There's ever so much more there, and in other places. Barbara ! " she began again, suddenly, after a pause, " there's a story about us, too, somewhere."

" O Hope ! that's an awful — jiggermaree ! " She wouldn't say " fib " to Hope.

" No, it aint. Maybe it isn't put in a book yet ; but there is a story ; and somebody can shut up their eyes, somewhere, and see it, I know ! "

" Stories aint true things. Miss Hammond says so. And when you shut your eyes you aint really there ! "

" You can't see anything that *isn't*," says Hope, positively. " And whatever there is, somebody will see. Up in heaven, at any rate."

" I'd lieveser they wouldn't be shutting their eyes and peeking at me. And I don't believe it. It's only a pretend."

" You can't pretend what there *isn't*," Hope persisted.

A schooner, with sails white in the sunlight, came floating up before the gentle, steady breeze from the south, just outside the edge of the swift, downward river current, closer and closer, till they could hear the captain's voice, ordering his crew of three men and a boy, and the rattle of the ropes, and the flap of the canvas, as they began to shorten sail and wear in toward the shore.

Right toward the wharf-head upon which they stood, she came. This had never happened before when Hope had been here. She was quite awed to see it. That a vessel, straight from she knew not where,— France, perhaps, as likely as not,— and going, by and by, maybe, up where the water first gleamed in sight under a distant hill-foot, and still up, into the forests and past the towns, like one of her own dreams, that started from what she knew, and drifted far into the beautiful and rich unseen out of which all knowledges came,— it made her catch her breath, and hold Barbara's hand hard, and look with great eyes filled with wonder.

Somebody, whose business it was, seeing the craft approach, ran down the wharf, and warned the children out of the way ;

a great rope was flung from the vessel's bow and fell upon the pier ; this man caught it, passed it quickly round an oak post that stood there, solid and shiny, and made it fast. The men on board took hold, and began to warp in ; and presently the hills opposite were cut up into little separate pictures between the masts and yards and the great, wrinkled rolls of sails furled up to these, and the slender tips of the topmost spars made delicate lines above the highest swell of the green land, against the deep, clear blue.

Only two idle children, who had no business there, hanging round to watch a river-schooner come up to her mooring-place ; but one of these, at least, was getting glimmerings of strange, untold intuitions that had to do with the great intercourse between far lands ; with all swift, sure, and beautiful messengerings ; dimly and unaware, with a communing yet more mystical and interior ; a reaching through some medium rarer than fluent wave or viewless air, breathing of real, white-pinioned thoughts, driven of the heavenly forces back and forth, making the joyful commerce of the spheres. Some eyes are so anointed from the birth ; anointed to the gradual seeing ; men as trees walking, at the first ; but the feeling of some full, possible vision is upon them ; hints of what all things show make all things wonderful. A little charity-girl in a blue gown ; ignorant ; all the toil of the world's mechanism of learning before her ; but a soul, nevertheless, touched with a spark of God's own light, by which she caught continually that which lies behind all words.

A woman and a little child were on the deck ; they came up out of the cabin just as the rope was flung ; the child's face was rosy and shining from fresh soap-and-water, and her hair was damp, and curled up round her temples where the comb had been drawn through. The woman had put on her shawl and bonnet,—they were the captain's wife and little daughter,—presently they were going ashore.

“ Oh, see ! ” said Hope. “ She has come in the vessel ! She belongs there ! ”

A plank had been thrown from the vessel's side to the wharf,

and up this the captain, a young, brown, hearty fellow, came springing, as Hope spoke.

The little child, with the damp, curling hair, had taught him to be "noticing of children," as his wife said; and when he saw Hope's eager face, he paused.

"You'd like to go on board, maybe?" he said, kindly. "Antoinette! I shan't be ready for ten minutes to go down town with you. See to these little folks, will you, if they want to look about!"

Hope wondered, at first, if he could be speaking to his vessel; for she had spelled out "Antoinette" upon her bows. But it was his wife, for whom his vessel was named; and she was already smiling, and the captain's hand was held out to Hope to help her down the plank if she would go. "You needn't be afraid," he said.

But it was something else that hindered honest Hope.

"I thank you, sir, but I guess I oughtn't," she replied. "It's time for me to go back now, and I've been trusted to take Barbara Graice."

"I guess you always will be trusted," cried John Drake, the captain, looking into her straight, clear eyes. "Where do you live?"

"House of Industry, and Asylum for the Indigent," repeated Hope. "I aint the Indigent; that's the old ladies. I go errands. That's how I came here."

"Maybe you'll go an errand again — this way. Antoinette and I will be here till to-morrow night." She did not know now, whether he meant Mrs. Drake, or the schooner, and it seemed to make very little difference.

"I'll ask leave," said Hope. "I don't suppose I ought, without." And so, with her head over her shoulder, with a longing, backward look, but a great determination in all the rest of her, she took Barbara Graice by the hand and turned away; walking fast up the wharf, and breaking to a run when she had turned the corner upon the street.

"That was pretty hard," she said, checking her speed, and drawing a long breath, when they had run two or three squares.

"What?" said Barbara.

"Coming away. If he'd coaxed me a little bit, I'm afraid I shouldn't."

"Coaxed? To go down that steep plank, over the water? I wouldn't have gone—for a fourpence!"

Hope was half glad to hear that. To-morrow, if there was a basket, and Barbara wouldn't want to come too, she might get leave.

She made three squares of patchwork that afternoon, and when she carried them to Miss Hammond she presented her request.

Miss Hammond was dubious.

Hope lifted her clear eyes up at her; golden-brown eyes she had, almost translucent in their sunshiny color; it was like looking into a forest brook where it comes out from under the shadow into pure day, to read them.

"I'll be proper careful," she said; "and I won't stay long. There was a kind lady, the captain's wife, and his little girl; O Miss Hammond, please! He told her to see to me."

Miss Hammond knew that, if she chose, the child might have done the thing without the asking. She reasoned from this truth, that it must all be as she said. She knew the place; it was above the busy wharves where the rush of city trade came in; it was one of those up-river schooners that picked up their freight from place to place as they came down, and discharged their return lading in like manner. She was wise, and trusted Hope.

"After school, at eleven o'clock, you can carry a basket up to Mrs. Gilspey's. And I'll give you till the clock strikes twelve. When you hear that, you must start for home. And you needn't say anything about it either, among the other children," she added.

"I will, ma'am, certain true. And I won't; not a single, identical word."

Hope plumed herself upon no favor or importance; she simply saw, as Miss Hammond herself did, that it would hardly do to make a precedent; not that she ever heard the word; but, as has been said, she was quick at seeing things.

Words are made after these. She knew them when she came to them, by an instinct. They fitted exactly to something she had already got.

The next day, when she reached the pier, Antoinette was there and "Theress," the child, but John Drake had gone into the town to attend to his business. Antoinette came up the gang-plank to meet the little visitor and help her on board; Theress jumped up and down upon the deck, and clapped her hands to see her coming. They told each other their names first,—Hope and Theress,—that was the way they pronounced this last, and then they went all over the vessel.

Theress showed Hope the little blue chest,—a real sailor's chest,—which was her own, and in which she kept all her clothes; this had a till inside which held her especial treasures,—a paper-box, with cotton-wool, on which lay a bit of cut purple glass, and a few dozen little scarlet guinea-peas with black eyes; little miracles of beauty they seemed to Hope, and when Theress gave her four of them for her own, it was as if the Queen of England had sent her the Koh-i-noor; there would have been room for no higher ecstasy or gratitude in her at that. Also, there was in a tiny blue hat-box a real little black beaver hat, about two inches high, made by Theress' cousin, who was a journeyman hatter in New York.

"Do you live here all the time?" asked Hope.

"All the summer-times," said Theress. "We don't keep house; we keep *schooner*. It's cheaper living; and it's real fun," she went on, blending the quoted pleasantries and prudence of her elders with her own little jolly originalities. "In the winters we stay at grandma's, way up to Grindon."

"Oh, what *is* up the river, please?" cried Hope, reminded by that, and turning round to Mrs. Drake for fuller answer than Theress could give.

"Farms and towns; each way, with bridges across; woods sometimes where you sail along at night in still, shady water, with the bushes bending down over the banks, and great trees filling up all the sky except a little river full of stars," said Antoinette Drake, talking unconscious poetry in her simple

way. Because, you see, she lived in the midst of it, and breathed it in ; she could give forth nothing else, answering a question like that. It was matter of fact to her. You might have found her common and practical enough, try her at other points ; her cookery, for example, or her gowns, or her visits ashore in the great towns ; utterly so at an abstract thought, perhaps.

“ And people ? ” went on Hope.

“ Oh, yes ; people, of course ; people everywhere, except in the woods.”

“ It’s queer,” said Hope, meditatively.

“ What ? ” asked Mrs. Drake. “ Queer that there should be people ? If there warn’t, what should we go up and down for ? ”

“ It’s queer that they should be there, and I should be here. And if I was there, *that* would be here.”

“ To-morrow’ll be to-day, when it comes,” said Antoinette, as if she had cheapened one wonder by bringing forward another.

“ Does this river rise in the mountains ? ” queried Hope, remembering the geography lessons she had caught scraps of in school.

“ Yes, and comes down through them. But the schooner can’t go up there.”

“ *How* does it rise ? ” Hope had dim idea, perhaps, of some grand apparitional birth, in full grandeur, of flood and mist, out of awful recesses.

“ Oh, it just begins, that’s all. As likely as not you could put the first of it into a waterpail or a pint bowl ; only it keeps coming.”

“ That’s a great ‘ only,’ isn’t it ? It seems to me everything is ‘ only.’ I mightn’t be anywhere in the world ; that seems so funny sometimes ; only God did make me. God mightn’t have been, either ; and then there wouldn’t have been anything at all. Only he is.”

“ I guess you’re an odd little stick,” said Mrs. Drake.

“ How should you like to go up river, yourself ? ” she asked Hope, presently.

"I'm going, some time. I've just made up my mind."

"You're one of the sort that can't be got ahead of. I'd like John to come back and talk to you a spell."

John did come before she went. He showed her other things, that she had not seen,—the wheel, and how it moved the rudder, and how that steered the vessel; a long chart—picture, she called it—of the river, with the channels and rocks and islands and landings, all marked out, and the names of the towns on the shores.

"Mr. Captain," she said to him, very seriously, after they had come to easy friendliness over this, "if ever you see any people up the river that would like to have a little girl come to live with them, will you tell 'em to come to the asylum and get me? Folks take girls so, and Miss Hammond says I'm to be bound out, or adopted, or something, soon. You see I'd like it to be *up* the river, because there it grows green and pleasant; down, there are the dirty wharves and streets, and then they say you come out to where it's all water; and then, perhaps, I'd have to go to France. I'd rather go up toward the mountains!"

"Do you know anything about mountains?"

"Yes; I remember I used to live there, a great many years ago.

Just four it was; Hope was eleven, now; but a strange dimness of antiquity had gathered over that small past of hers, out of which an older perception would apprehend that she had but barely come.

John Drake smiled.

"She's a little old-fashioned thing, as ever you see," said Antoinette, by way of helping him, wife-fashion, to recognize that which was before his eyes, but which had happened to come first before her own.

"She's smart and knowing too," she added. "If anybody did want a girl to bring up—I guess I'll mention it in Grindon."

"I don't think that place sounds pretty," said Hope. "Here's one that does," she went on, returning to the examination of the chart,—"'Broadfields.' That seems large,

and green, and sunshiny. I'd like to go there. I wish you'd mention me in Broadfields," she added, very gravely.

"I guess I will," said John Drake. "You've pitched on the very picture of a place for prettiness, of all that's on the river. And likeliness, too, for that matter," he added. "Now supposing you see if you can eat a big apple." And he pulled out of his coat-pocket, turning it inside out as he did so, with the bulk of the fruit and his own fist grasping it, an enormous red apple; red all over, shining and dazzling; red half through, he told her,—"see if it wasn't."

"I've got another in my other pocket for Theress," he said, as he perceived her hesitate.

"I thought something smelt apple-y," said Hope, quite excited, and coloring up with gratitude. "Just like Mrs. Gilspey's back garden. Thank you, sir. I'll give a piecee to Barbara Graice, and one to old Mrs. Whistler. She's one of the Indigents. There'll be ever so many pieces." There always were ever so many pieces in any pleasure that came to Hope.

Just at that instant, the great church clock in Tower Street began its stroke of twelve.

"There! I've got to go back now, straight away," she said, jumping up, prompt as Cinderella at her first ball. "But I don't care! I've had *such* a good time!"

John Drake helped her up the plank. "I'll bear it in mind about Broadfields," he said. "I shall be at New Oxford tomorrow. That's the end of my run; schooners don't go higher than that. Broadfields is the next place. There's mostly folks down, and I know some of 'em. I shouldn't much wonder if you got a chance, some time; not right off, this trip, perhaps."

"Oh, no," said Hope. "I don't ever have things right off, hardly. One of these days." She promised herself, as other people promised her.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARM'S PROVIDENCE.

HOPE took her patchwork, and went up into the Old Ladies' Room. She had her piece of apple, also, to carry to Mrs. Whistler ; she had kept it all, untouched, for three days, till Saturday afternoon came ; and she had the whole story of the schooner, and the river-picture, and Antoinette and Theress, and the blue chest, and the kind, hearty captain himself, to tell to her old friend.

It was a long room, with six windows in it ; three at each end ; two large chambers and two little dressing-rooms had been thrown into one apartment, taking the whole third story of the house. The floor was bare, scrubbed white ; there were strips of carpet laid down beside the beds, which were single, all alike, ranged with their heads against the wall on either side the fireplace ; one also in each square recess formed by the taking in of the little dressing-rooms just mentioned, which had been at the ends of the passage.

These recesses were the desirable places, — the corner lots ; having a window and some extra space, and the advantage of comparative retirement ; next to these were held in high consideration the cots precisely opposite, with a window in each narrow passage alongside, the special franchise of their occupants ; the places by the fire ranked third, — in winter perhaps took precedence. The four who lodged between floated about ; considered the middle windows theirs of right, but went visiting, — especially in the square before the fire in fire-times ; the coterie here, indeed, of a frozen winter's day, became a grand assembly.

These old women had their etiquettes, their cliques, their jealousies and rivalries, their real friendships. Some of them

had their visiting lists, also, of people outside ; friends of old times who came to see them ; benefactresses who remembered their wants and infirmities with little gifts ; each section of the room displayed in its comforts and small adornments, the resources, in such wise, of its owner. Here came in one rivalry, the constant and prevailing one ; another, was in the number and severity of past misfortunes.

An old woman who could tell a tale of better days, when her husband had sailed an India ship for rich owners, and she had lived in a pretty two-story house in a sea-coast village, "with carpets to all the floors, and white curtains to the windows, and real china in the closet," — of a terrible hurt he got at sea, and being brought home on his back, a cripple for the rest of his days, and of his "living along most mysteriously by the will of God" till all their saved-up funds were spent ; of a fire that came after he had died, and "neighbors had come forrud and made up a purse, and the old owners had sent down a hundred dollars, and she had just begun to get cleared up and settled down, and thinking of a little comfort taking in a couple of boarders, and house and carpets and curtains had been burnt up, and most of the china broke a-saving of it ;" of going out nursing after that, and "living round amongst pains and aches till she got so many of her own she had to come here with 'em, and lay out to make the best she could of 'em, and thank God they was no wuss, and she'd got the east corner where the sun came in o' mornings," — she, perhaps, carried the palm ; but it was disputed by another who had lost her husband in early youth, out West, where they had begun on a farm ; had had fever and ague, "till the courage was nigh shook out of her ;" had got home again somehow, to the East, and brought up her two children, a girl and a boy ; the girl married a well-to-do country trader, and then, "before s'ever they'd got into the new house he built, *she* went and died ;" and the boy would learn a painter's trade, "though she knew 'twas awful unwholesome, and never wholly give in to it ; and there ! three years ago *he* died, of pison on the lungs, and she came here, and she'd got an inside-bed and no rocking-chair, and was wore to death hearin' of Miss

Parcher's china." — "You've had your bread and butter, some of it," she would say, reproachfully to the shipmaster's widow, when they strove in lamentation together; "but mine alwers slipped clean through my fingers, butter-side down!"

Mrs. Whistler never joined in these comparisons of ill; she dwelt as it were in a silent consciousness of greatness, — meek, thankful soul as she truly was! — knowing that her long pain, of cureless disease, had only to be named to swallow up, like an Aaron's rod, all lesser plaints; and when her nights and days of sufferings came, as they would at intervals, — when her envied west corner, the best in all the room, was full of a low, patient moan, — these tellings and strivings hushed themselves about her, and her housemates would look over at her, stealthily and pitifully, and lean their heads together and whisper questionings of whether "she'd go this time," and after a decent pause and with the preface of a sigh, would wonder "who'd get the corner after her; 'twould seem strange to see another body there;" and then a closing sigh would make the sentence properly parenthetical.

Mrs. Whistler sat and sewed upon fine cambric; she was making, stitch by stitch, her cap and shroud; but it might have been a young girl busy at her wedding finery, for the cheer there would be about her on her well days when she could so work. Up over her head was a little book-case of two shelves; here she had some old, friendly volumes that had lived with her through all that history of years that she never in its continuity related; some, also, that a kindness of to-day had placed there for their pleasant pictures and comfortable thoughts.

Hope read out of these aloud to her, sometimes; sometimes she had a book to carry away and read herself, by the staircase window; this was how she came by "*Paradise Lost*."

She held up the great piece of apple, — almost the half, freshly cut, — the red side out, toward Mrs. Whistler.

"That's for you — to begin with," she said; and so she pulled a little cricket, and sat down.

"Marm's Providence, again, dear," said the old woman. "First a-waiting and a-wanting; and then presently you know why. It's just like the day my gruel got burnt, and then Miss

Ainsworth came in with that elegant chicken broth. I've been thirsty ever since my dinner,—the soup was salt to-day,—and not a drink of water in the room, nor anybody happening in to go and fetch one. It was just that piece of apple on the way and my mouth a-making up for it."

Hope knew what "Marm's Providence" meant; she had asked that question and been told about it long before.

"It was when we were little, at home, that it began," had been the story. "My mother always set her faith on Providence; and father, he used to call her 'marm'; it was a homely, old-fashioned, country way of calling, but it meant the whole with him,—wife, and heart's queen, and mainstay, and head, and contriver, and everything that a woman could be to a man, or to a house. I used to think he had Marm, and Marm had Providence; though he believed as firm as she did in his heart, only he liked to lay it off on to her, as he did everything else. He gave her the credit, and let her go ahead, and just eased things along for her. We had him, and Marm, and Providence, all three; it wasn't likely but we would be well cared for.—So, when anything looked a little dubious, as if it mightn't work out well, or we couldn't see, perhaps, how a thing was to be done that needed to be, he'd say, 'Marm's Providence'll see to that, I guess;' and it always did. After she died, he kept on saying it, and it kept on coming true; he said it with a different sound to it though;—maybe it aint quite right, but I've thought it might have been somehow so that Saint Paul used to say, 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' I know better now what that means, thinking of father's love, and mother's trustingness, and how he depended on what she lived so sure by."

"Are you pretty well to-day?" asked Hope.

"Well, child, yes; and satisfied. *That's* well. I shall live just long enough. I did think I'd have been gone before this; but when you're certain, you needn't be in a hurry. 'Thank the Lord for daily breath, but leap for joy at certain death,'—that's what I say to myself. The comfort and the rest are pretty near. That's what the ache and the tiredness mean. And they'll be *according*. When I think of that, it almost

makes me greedy of pain. It's God's note of hand, Hope. Lay it up,—against your time comes."

"And now, I've got a story to tell," says Hope. Not breaking in disregardfully; she always listened Mrs. Whistler through; laying up, so, more treasure than she counted at the moment, "against her time should come;" but with childish straightforwardness, she made no forced reply, took her turn to speak, and spoke what was waiting in her.

"How your eyes shine, child!" said the old lady. "Marm's Providence has been doing something new for you!"

"Where do you think that apple came from?" Hope asked, her eyes sparkling yet more, in her impatience to tell all.

"Out of some orchard, where the sun shone on it, and it grew and grew, and sweetened and sweetened, it didn't know what for. No more do you."

"But last of all?" pursued Hope. "You can't guess. I'll tell you. It came up the river in a schooner! At least,—I don't know; but it came out of a man's pocket that *had* come up the river in a schooner, and he was the captain of it. How do you suppose I got it?"

"Well,—he met you on the wharf, and gave it to you?"

"Oh, you can't *half* guess!" cried Hope, laughing out. "It was a great deal better than that! I was *in* the schooner with him; and Antoinette was there, and Theress; they *live* there, and go up and down! They told me what was up the river, and he showed me a picture of it. There's woods, and towns, and meadows, and hills; and people everywhere. *Places*, Mrs. Whistler, and *chances*. There's no knowing what there might be up that river!"

Hope made very determined pauses, now and then, and pulled her needle through and through her patchwork seam diligently; it was needful, that her sewing might catch up with her talk. Then she began again.

"It goes so, in one place;" and she laid a strip of calico down upon her knee, and scored with her needle a winding mark upon it. "It makes a great scallop, and in that scallop is *Broadfields*. How does that sound? What do you think of that, for a place? With hills behind, and the river in front?

He told me so. And everything green and wide, and nothing in the way of the sky?"

"I think you'd like to go there, sometime, wouldn't you? Or to a place like it? I think your mouth's a-making up for it, and I think you'll get it."

"Do you, truly, Mrs. Whistler?" Hope's great eyes widened, and their golden color was clear and beaming. "I told him that I wished he'd mention me in Broadfields," she added, in her quaint way, trying to speak very quietly and reasonably. "And—why, that's all my story, every word of it! I thought I had ever so much to tell!"

"You'll go." Mrs. Whistler looked at the child wishfully, as she repeated this.

Hope's golden eyes suddenly clouded. "Oh, dear!" she cried, "I never thought. You won't have me to come and see you, if I do. What will you have instead?"

"Marm's Providence will take care of that," serenely quoted Mrs. Whistler from the Family Creed.

It was a homely faith and a homely phrase; but the soul of it was as grand as that of the old Hebrew refrain,— "The God of Abraham and of Isaac, and of Jacob."

The half-hour bell rang below, and Hope folded up her small work, and stuck her needle in. At that moment Miss Hammond opened the Old Ladies' door.

"Hope? Oh, you *are* here? You're wanted, in the matron's room."

"It's come—the beginning of it," said Mrs. Whistler, softly to herself. "And I think now, it'll be my turn pretty soon.—'Up the river—with the hills behind; green, and wide, and nothing in the way of the sky.'—'The gates of it shall not be shut by day, and there shall be no night there. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of water. And there shall be no more pain. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"

The old lady folded up her work also. There were but a few stitches to be set. "Another day," she said, and stuck the needle in.

Another day, only a week later, somebody else finished the last stitches.

Somebody else might have the west corner now.

Hope went sailing up the river. In the still of the sunset, and the early beauty of the moon,—through calm wood-shadow, looking up into the “river of stars,” out into meadow-broadenings where the perfect sphere of heaven arched over a perfect plane of earth,—she went, making a dream-voyage of delight. She slept through the mere midnight; when the dawn reddened over the hills, she was out on deck again; she saw the rosiness creep and blush, and spread and burn into the intense pervading light of the white day; she heard the cocks crow from the cheery farms, chanting their fresh “All hail!” to the earth as her features came up out the darkness,—“Old world! how do you do-oo-o?” A mystical stir everywhere was rising out of the hush of night; the very grass-blades and the river-sedge rustled as they had not rustled before, and the great trees stretched their green arms from their sleep; and out on the high road she could hear the distant sound of wagon-wheels and horses’ feet.

It was yet early morning when they hauled up to the pier at New Oxford. Up from the water, street above street, three rows or four, the white houses stood, with a green surge of tree-tops swelling up between; and there was a hum in the town of going to and fro; yet, compared with the city, it was still. It would be stiller out toward Broadfields; almost as still as it had been down the river among the meadows.

Hope stood by the rail, her bright hair blowing in the pleasant wind; the morning sunshine on it; her eyes all alight with expectation.

A young man, sitting in an open wagon on the wharf, tossed the reins over his horse’s back, and sprang out. He and John Drake shook hands. Then he turned to the young girl his honest, kindly face.

“You’ve come?” he said; and helped her up the plank upon the pier.

A stranger in a strange place. Going to a new home, where

there might be good for her, or there might be ill ; standing between the blue, free, glistening river and the busy town, as she stood at this moment between her bright dream and the reality that was to come of it ; but showing a pure certainty in the clear, wonderful eyes, and a fresh, radiant eagerness in her whole face and figure, over which the morning sun was shining and the sweet wind blew.

“ What is your name ? ” asked Richard Hathaway.

“ Hope Devine,” replied the girl, lifting the golden light of her eyes upon him.

“ Whew ! ” That does not spell it ; it was a low, gentle breathing of surprise, not rude, but blithe and musical. “ I think so ! ”

It had happened that the busy early summer-time was coming ; and that Mrs. Hathaway’s Martha needed help ; Richard had seen it, as he was quick to see every want that touched his mother.

It happened that John Drake was Richard Hathaway’s friend. Happened ? This, also, was “ Marm’s Providence.”

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT ANTISS DOLBEARE REMEMBERS.

SOUTH SIDE.

ONE day that next summer, Augusta Hare came among us ten times more a heroine than ever. Where she was, things happened. John Gilpin never rode a race but she was there to see. Some people seem to have a sort of resinous electricity like this, which draws inevitably toward them all flying shreds, big and little, of mortal circumstance.

She came upon the stage unannounced, in borrowed clothing ; beside which, she had nothing on earth to bring with her but her guitar, and a pink calico wrapper ; a pink calico wrapper, for her to whom nothing was yet legitimate, but crape and bombazine, or little white-dotted black muslins and calicoes at the lightest. I remember how this pointed the calamity, and seemed to give a dramatic emphasis and underscoring to the tale of general desecration and violence.

The Ursuline Convent had been burned down by a mob.

A little piece of Middle Age life had been revived and enacted in our tamely proper New England community. Shrieking nuns driven from the sanctity of their cloister ; the sacred walls invaded at midnight by rough, infuriated men, rushing where the feet of men, since builders ended their first labors, had never penetrated before. Quietness and holy seclusion changed in an hour for riot and blazing devastation.

Augusta told us all about it, graphically. How out of a sound sleep, she had been startled by a rude, gruff voice, and a man's rough hand laid forcibly on her shoulder. "Get up, if you want to save your life !" had been the warning ; and a red torch went flashing past her open door. How, in her night-

dress, with bare feet, and her hair streaming, catching at this pink wrapper which happened to lie beside her on a chair, she sprang from her bed, and followed her arouser into the corridor ; how he spoke a little more gently then, seeing her fright,—seeing also herself, I could not help inferring,—and even asked if she had anything in particular that she wished to save. How, never thinking of her clothes, as not one soul in fifty ever does think of the right thing in a fire, she had said “her guitar,” and how he had snatched up the case, and, taking it under his arm, had hurried her along the passages and down the stairs, meeting wild, excited men at every step, and out into the shrubbery, where she overtook some fleeing nuns ; how they found shelter in the town, and the sisters had to put on such profane costume as people could lend them, and she “had nothing under the sun to go downstairs in but that pink gown.”

Augusta was always personally circumstantial in her narrations ; she lived in the accessories, I think ; that was how the real things passed over her so lightly. How she stood, and what she was doing, when a surprising or dreadful piece of news came,—the little touches of phase and grouping that made a picture of an incident,—these were given with wonderful instinctive skill ; and the strong light fell always on the principal figure. “*Quæque ipse vidi et quorum pars magna fui.*” If you knew this little bit of Virgil, it came up. It seemed really charming, hearing her recite them, to have endured such things, to have met with such adventure ; above all, to have them now to tell.

The public occurrence excited strongly our little community. Anything like lawlessness was then so rare, that men’s minds leaped at the suggestion to the wildest fancies of possible prevailing anarchy ; people stopped in the streets to talk about it. Uncle Royle’s book-store was full of eager gossipers ; it is amusing to compare the stir made then with the fleeting impressions of to-day. Two words, after a morning salutation in a railroad-car, are the sum and end of all the attention any event can claim. In those days, people came long,

separate ways to get together, and when assembled, they would talk the thing down to the bare thread.

Augusta Hare was regarded with intense curiosity ; she represented the whole catastrophe, and brought New Oxford into special relation with it. Even after she got a proper dress, she was quite modest about venturing into the streets, she was looked at so ; and at church, for a Sunday or two, it was positively awkward. She had remarkable tact, though ; it never seemed a silly, palpable affectation in her ; it was simply, I believe, the sympathetic action of her own intense self-consciousness that made those about her recognize what I can only describe as her centrality.

And we, happy household ! became, by a singularity of circumstance, a part, also, of this sublimity.

The Edgells were away, and the house was closed. Margaret and Julia were in the midst of their summer term at school, and Mr. and Mrs. Edgell had just left, upon a long journey. So the stage had come round to River Street, bringing Augusta Hare, and her guitar case, and her pink wrapper, and her romantic consequence ; and she had begged Miss Chism to take her in for a few days, if she could spare her a room. She asked it gracefully, and as an especial favor ; implying delicately, at the same time, compensation. We were too well off for that ; we would not think of it, of course ; Miss Hare was made welcome as a guest. And this was a great and wonderful event to me.

The worst of it was, that the politer Aunt Ildy was to Augusta Hare, the harder she was to me. I always got on better with Miss Chism when I was quite alone with her ; my familiar crimes were not brought in such black contrast with the veiled infirmities and presumed excellences of strangerhood. The gracious confidences of Aunt Ildy with our guest were times of exclusion for me ; not literal exclusion, but that worse interior consciousness of being thrust aside, and as it were contemned. I was even under a curious impression, from my aunt's manner, of its being a shortcoming in me that I had not been, somehow, nearly burnt up, or otherwise distinguished ; that if I had but been, I might take a quite different stand

with her. I was a commonplace child only, and a trial; the interesting and the effective were not for me.

I knew this well enough; but how was I to help it? She would not let me go to a convent,—not even to a boarding-school. Of course, Aunt Ildy had really no such actual undervaluing of me in her mind; it was only a peculiarity of hers that she could not be very gracious in more than one direction at once; the effect, however, was the same with me. I had all manner of fancies of what might happen: I might break an arm or a leg some day, and be brought home,—I had given up my childish notion of the glory of fainting away. I might secretly compose some verses, and get them printed in a paper, and become famous. I might, one of these days, have a lover,—though where he was to come from, or how come after me there, with the Chism battery in the way, was hard to guess,—and get married. The burning ambition of my soul was to make myself, some day, of consequence with Miss Chism. I was not so unlike all the rest of the world in this. Miss Chism, like Mrs. Grundy, was a representative woman; everybody who has a goading ambition has knowledge in one guise or another, of a cold, exasperating unrecognition which it would be worth while to die and conquer.

Miss Hare had numerous calls of inquiry, and abundant invitations from the very first. The Copes' carriage waited at the door for nearly an hour, while the young ladies were hearing the whole story and trying to persuade Augusta to go home with them. But she put them off. By and by, perhaps, if they could have her; but Miss Chism had been very kind, and she could not run right away. I think this was truly a reason with her, and that she was not ungrateful; also I think she was fond of me; but it was true, as well, that her plain sewing and dress-making were yet to be completed, and she would rather have an adequate wardrobe before visiting at South Side.

She took me with her one afternoon when she walked over and called at the Copes'. I felt very nicely dressed that day, I remember. I had a new blue muslin, and Aunt Ildy allowed me to put it on. Indeed, Augusta Hare took friendly

little liberties in her easy, pleasant way, assuming it for granted that I could wear what I chose, and suggesting this or that, sometimes, in Aunt Ildy's presence. I had the benefit of it; but it gave me the old feeling of a sort of duplicity on my part; and, sometimes, I objected against my own secret wish, because I had an instinct of Miss Chism's secret disrelish. Then, I knew I *was* double; yet it was only a crooked conscientiousness.

I had on my blue muslin, and my straw bonnet, that had been new last fall, trimmed with white ribbon; and Augusta Hare had given me a pretty French collar with a lace edge, and a blue bow.

It was almost tea-time for us; but the Copes had only just got through dinner. "The ladies will be in from the dining-room directly," the servant said who showed us into the pleasant, cool library, with its summer matting on the floor, and its furniture and hangings of heavy green damask. Great cases of books reached from the floor to the ceiling, and from side to side; between the shelves hung fringed green velvet; silver branches for candles were fastened beside the frames. I supposed, in my simplicity, that these walls of literature represented the familiar reading of the family, that every one of them knew it all; I was quite oppressed with the air of elegance and learning.

I do not think that I was outwardly awkward; my quick feeling of grace and beauty gave me immunity from this; but I braced my feet nervously against the floor, and did not know it till my toes began to ache; and I could not think of a word to say beyond mere replies, when the girls came in and tried to be sociable with me.

Mrs. Cope gave me a feeling of comfort the minute she appeared. She was such a simple, sweet, motherly lady; with the old-time dignity upon her that was homely also. She had on a large white muslin apron over her silk dress, and her basket of white sewing stood in a deep window-seat, just as she had left it to go into dinner. She made me think at once, and did always after, of Mrs. Selby in the Cedar Parlor, in "Sir Charles Grandison."

She sat down by me, and showed me some beautiful pictures

of English scenery, and stately interiors of old hills and castles. Mr. Cope had been a great deal abroad. She was explaining these when Allard Cope came in. He was my dancing-school partner of two years ago. He was a handsome boy, with the grace of high breeding, and the free courtesy that only comes of having received as well as given it, all one's life. At this time he was about sixteen.

His sisters introduced him to Miss Hare, to whom he bowed, and then came and sat down by his mother and me. We finished looking over the portfolio we had begun, and then Mrs. Cope asked Allard to fetch another, which had views of Paris. As he came back with it, a carriage was driven to the door, from which other visitors alighted, and were shown in. Mrs. Cope moved to receive them, and Allard and I drew back into a corner, where he remained with me, turning over the engravings and talking about them.

It was a glimpse into such a rich and beautiful life! So rich and beautiful that it made me afraid, but for Allard's kindness and Mrs. Cope's simpleness. I thought that with them I should not have been afraid, if it had been even ten times more stately and splendid. I thought I could even get used to it all in a short time, and accept it as quietly as they did.

We all went down into the garden presently. Mrs. Cope had some new French roses which she wished to show to her friends. She went and put on a white muslin sun-bonnet, and brought a pair of garden scissors, and then led the way down the broad, shallow steps which descended from a flagged terrace, at the back of the house, to the smooth green turf-walks and exquisitely kept flower-beds of the pleasure-ground.

Allard still stayed with me; and while his mother, chatting gracefully, cut here and there choice blossoms, and gathered them into a great nosegay for the ladies with her, he pulled roses and sweet-verbena sprigs and delicious pinks and white lilies for me.

I was so glad that I had on my blue muslin, and that my gloves and shoes were quite new. I felt a warm color spreading in my cheeks, and that I looked up brightly at him in

answer to the bright, kind looks he gave me. I walked in a sort of fairy land.

Coming up again, after we had fed the gold-fish in a clear pond at the garden-foot, we got grouped differently. Augusta Hare and Allard walked together, and the Miss Copes took me with them. I had grown gay and fearless now ; we talked about the old school-times at the academy, and of the Edgells, and of when they would leave school and come home. The Copes remembered that I was bright at puzzles and games and sure at hard lessons. They reverted casually to these things, in a way far more flattering than abrupt compliment ; they made me feel that they held me in some consideration. I am sure there was never a more thoroughly polite family than the Copes.

I dare say they never thought of me again till they were especially reminded ; but they sent me home full of delighted thoughts of them, and ecstatic remembrances of the beautiful hour that they had given me. Augusta Hare told me something as we walked down to the bridge, which nearly completed my mental oversetting, and made me feel a sudden electric flash of pleasure escape from my eyes, as I had felt the conscious sparkle of passion that day with Aunt Ildy at Hathaway Farm. Allard Cope had said, "What a very pretty girl" I was !

Aunt Ildy thought, the next day, that it hadn't agreed with me visiting at South Side ; I couldn't seem to settle to anything properly. It was true that I was more forgetful, and that small home duties were more irksome to me than ever. I suppose I was really quite good for nothing, by severely practical appraisal, for a day or two ; but I thought Aunt Ildy might make some allowance for the first time, and what it must be to me. Experiences are possible to the gravest and most methodical, which may utterly break in upon their order, and absorb their thoughts ; which may be great enough in their gladness or their grief to sweep away from before them all ordinary claim and obstacle. I have seen it so ; it takes far more to do this as one gets on in life ; but the elders should remember that everything is great to the young ; each

pleasant novelty is an overwhelming excitement; all disappointment is tremendous loss; every new look at life is an opening into the limitless possible and to come; they should allow place for what Aunt Ildy called "scatter-wittedness"; it will take place now and then in the programme, where there are wits to scatter; beginning as they do upon a world so full of dispersed demand and attraction.

I sobered down as fast as I could; I hid away thoughts and dreams to be called up and fully indulged at rare moments; I confined my talk with Aunt Ildy, and in her presence, to the most staid and useful matters; to Lucretia, in her own room, I told over and over again the story of that lovely afternoon.

All through this fifteenth summer of my life,—I was fourteen in June,—I seemed to be looking one way and the other,—touching alternately, and sharing with, two distinct kinds of living. There was a charm in each. They were separate from each other; at least, they rarely met in any conscious sympathy; they were wholly unlike and irreconcilable in practice; yet I, from a middle point, could turn easily and happily to either. There are almost indistinguishable gradations in our New England life and society; especially in country towns. It was perfectly natural for me to associate freely with the Edgells; it was as natural for them to be noticed by the Copes; it was not an overstrained condescension now and then for the Copes to be kind to me. It was as pleasant and as natural, on the other hand, for me to go to the Hathaways, and to be happy at the Farm. Indeed, though neither of them probably dreamed of it, I, having experience of the goodness and loveliness of both, found Mrs. Cope and Mrs. Hathaway by no means unlike. Simplicity and perfect breeding in the one were akin to, and reminiscent of, plain dignity and sweet whole-heartedness in the other. I could imagine them almost easily changing places, if circumstance should work so.

My position was the middle and prosaic, the negative one; the wishful and the restless one, being able to look so, each way, into the others'.

Just before the Edgells returned home, Augusta Hare came in one morning from the Copes', where she was now staying, being set down at our door by the young ladies, who had driven on to attend to business in the town. She called to ask Aunt Ildy if I might come over to South Side and take tea that afternoon.

We were in the sitting-room, and I was doing up ruffles at the large table where I had my ruffling-iron. It wanted a fresh heater at that moment, and I quietly drew out the cold one and went into the kitchen to exchange it. My heart was going like a little trip-hammer, but I did not move so much as an eyelid. I knew my sole chance depended on my not getting excited, or pleading too impetuously. It was safer to leave the pleading to Miss Hare.

It was a good stroke my leaving the room. I was really calmer when I came back ; and Aunt Ildy had not committed herself by an immediate refusal in my hearing, which could not have been receded from. She had probably half refused at first ; when I came in Augusta was saying in her most winning way : —

“ You’ll think of it, I’m sure, Miss Chism ; we shall all hope to see her ; but you need not trouble to send word, you know. If she comes, she can be there by four. And Mrs. Cope sent her love, and asked me to beg of you, if you would be so kind, to let her have your receipt for white currant wine that I told her of. Anstiss can bring it ; or if anything does prevent, I’ll call again for it.”

The carriage was heard in the street below, and Augusta rose.

“ See about it, Aunt Ildy, won’t you ? ” she repeated, and was gone.

She had wonderful tact. She might have known Aunt Ildy all her life, and not done better. If she had pressed for an immediate answer, it would very likely have been “ No.” That would have been on the safe side. But she showed a sweet confidingness, gave plenty of time for thinking it over, and left her desire at Miss Chism’s discretion.

“ Have you finished marking those new pillow-cases ? ” asked

Aunt Ildy of me. It was Saturday, and they were to be put in the wash on Monday.

"All but four, auntie," I replied. "I can do those after dinner." And I went on fluting my ruffle.

"Can I go, Aunt Ildy?" I asked a few minutes later when I had finished, and was about to carry away the things, the topmost of which were two caps of her own, exquisitely white and light with their double bordering of cambric and lace laid in the finest and most regular groovings.

"I don't know; I'll see," replied Miss Chism.

I considered that as good as settled, after the old understanding, especially as I saw her go to the old-fashioned secretary presently, take down her manuscript receipt-book, and try a pen.

I did not wait to watch her, but made haste upstairs. Then on the very tips of my toes, right over her head, but so lightly that not an old board creaked in the floor, I executed an original inspired waltz, ending with a flourish that I had never heard of by name, but which was legitimate art,—a real, perfect pirouette. Dancing is an utterance. I invented, out of my own gladness, one of its established parts of speech.

I carried my blue muslin into the kitchen and ironed it out. I crimped my prettiest bits of lace, and basted them into the neck and sleeves. I laid out my nicest white petticoat, with little tucks and points round the bottom;—a work of long toil and many sorrows it had been to me, but I was very glad to have it now; in those days, before sewing machines and the multiplied extravagances of needlework, most young ladies made for themselves whatever elegancies of the kind they had, and it was a shame at fifteen not to have made something;—I assured myself that my best open-worked thread stockings, with the silk clocks, were in fresh readiness and order, and I gave a look to the condition of my large starched under-sleeves of corded cambric, that were to hold out in balloon shape the full round over-sleeves of my dress, with their pointed, falling capes, trimmed with little ruffles of their own material. The crimpings of thread lace finished

delicately the close bands into which they were gathered about the arm. I had high morocco shoes of what we called tea-color,—pale, with plenty of cream in it,—laced up on the instep. All these things I put ready, and then went down and ate my dinner without the least bit of appetite, but with resolute show of common sense.

"Shall I get ready, aunt?" I asked, when I had helped her put away the glass and silver.

"Yes, I suppose so."

She did not speak ungraciously. She was never outwardly affectionate to any one. With all her hardness of discipline, and her taking me at my worst by way of finally making the best of me, she had, I do not doubt, a stern regard for me at the bottom of her heart; but if she had said "Yes, dear," I should have thought she was gone mad or going to die; or that the millennium had come, and had begun with her.

I did look pretty when I had finished. My hair was getting a brighter, burnished tint upon the softness of the childish light-brown, and my eyes had the clear, intense shade which blue eyes only have in youth and health. I smiled at myself in the glass, remembering Allard Cope's compliment, and I caught sight of small, even, white teeth between lips that were far prettier when smiling. I put a blue ribbon round my head, and fastened it in a bow over my left ear, letting the ends float down behind. I tucked them up, though, carefully, into the crown of my bonnet, as I tied that on. I buttoned on my long sleeves for the street, and put on my gloves. I was all ready then, and I went downstairs.

"I don't think it will be best for you to stay to tea, Ans-tiss," Aunt Ildy said, as if she were not crushing me down with an avalanche of cruel disappointment. Perhaps she really did not dream that she was.

"O Aunt Ildy!" I cried, in a pain of involuntary resistance and reproach.

"Don't get excited now," said Aunt Ildy. "You can go up and call, and carry the receipt. You can stay an hour, if you want to. But I don't think it's best for you to stay to tea."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?"

"I didn't tell you anything about it. I've been thinking it over. There's nobody to go after you in the evening, and I don't want to be under obligation to them for seeing you back. We can't invite the Copes to tea. You must make up your mind that I know best."

The tears were in my eyes and voice. There was a hot anger on my cheeks. I felt I had been ill-treated, yet I could find nothing to gainsay.

"I *can't* go, just to tell them I *can't* come," I said, despairingly, struggling against the tears and the temper. "They'll insist on my staying. They'll say they can send me home. I can't tell them you won't be under obligation."

"You can say what I tell you,—that it isn't convenient. If you can't do that, you'd better not go. You are not to stay to tea. That is all." And she walked away, and left me standing there.

When she was quite out of hearing, I stamped my foot down just once upon the floor. I think I should almost have died, if I had not done that. Then I ran downstairs, and out at the front door, and walked off, down Cross Street, opposite, fast towards the bridge.

I walked so fast, and my feelings were in such a whirl, that I got to the Copes' front door before I had begun to make up my mind what to say. They were all out on the back terrace, and the maid who met me recognized me, and showed me at once through the house to the garden entrance.

Then I had it all to do in a minute, in the little bustle of greeting and welcome. I had to hold on to my bonnet-strings, when Laura Cope would have untied them; to shrink away from Augusta Hare who would have taken my muslin cape, and to stammer out confusedly, transposing and mixing up my meanings:—

"No—I can't—I only came—I didn't come—to stop but—a great while!"

They all smiled. They could not have helped it if they had been duchesses; only their perfect good-breeding kept them, I am sure, from shrieks. I laughed myself, in the midst of a

flame of mortification and a springing of tears. If I had known what I was in danger of, it would have been all over with me. I was as near hysterics as a simple child could be.

"Never mind," Mrs. Cope said, kindly. "Sit here in the shade by me. You are so warm with your walk. We'll talk about the bonnet presently."

The sweet summer wind came through great linden-trees and over fresh-smelling grass and masses of flowers. The calm, restful hills lay green and round against the blue horizon, and little white clouds went floating by, far overhead. There was a glimpse of the river-dazzle out between the open fields, where it made its sharp western bend around the town. It is a great thing to look *away*. Between brick walls, sorrows pin one down, and grind and gnaw one's life. It is so natural, when things go wrong in-doors, to sit and look out of a window,—if the window looks anywhere. You think that you are sulky or miserable,—perhaps you mean to be, at first; but presently you have gotten all over it. You have gone out from yourself, away off among tree-branches and cloud-islands, carrying your trouble with you, and there you give it the slip, and leave it to melt away.

I felt calm and bright again in five minutes, sitting there by Mrs. Cope, listening to her friendly words contrived to call for little answer, and linking their pleasantness dreamily with every pleasant color and motion and form upon which my vision lingered.

"And now about the bonnet," she began again, just at a nice moment, when nobody was particularly looking. "Can't we have it off? or what is the difficulty?"

I began at the right end now. "I might take it off, I suppose; but I wanted to tell you first, Aunt Ildy sent her compliments, and said I might stay for an hour or so, but that it wouldn't be convenient to spare me till after tea."

"Perhaps it was the sending for you? I thought of that, and meant to manage it. It ought to have been mentioned. I can send down a message now to Miss Chism, and tell her we'll take care of you, if she will allow you to stay. We shall

.drive out after tea, and we can bring you round on our way home."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Cope; but, indeed — please not! I'm sure Aunt Ildy *meant* me to come home."

"Then we won't say another word," said Mrs. Cope, with the truest kindness; "but make the most of our hour, and manage better next time."

There was a whole world of consolation for me in those last two words.

They got it all into that hour, I think. They had the bagatelle board brought out on the terrace, — croquet was a thing to come in the after years, — and we played the game with the bridge, as easiest for a beginner. Allard and his mother and I sided together against the Miss Copes and Augusta. We played nine rounds, and came out a hundred and fifty ahead. Allard said I made wonderful strokes. I thought I had wonderful luck, and was delighted not to spoil their side of the game.

Then they would have raspberries and cream, and delicious little almond cakes for me; the best part of the tea that I could not stay for; and then Allard gathered me some flowers, and when I put on my gloves and bade good-by, he said it was time for the mail, and he would walk down with me and bring home his mother's letters.

It was their beautiful way of entertaining, I know; everybody found it delightful at the Copes; and they were kindly sorry for my embarrassment and disappointment, and so turned it all into the greater if the shorter pleasure; somebody else came in, very likely, as soon as I had gone, and was just as solicitously attended to; but it made me feel as nothing but Richard Hathaway's and his mother's kindness had ever made me feel before; as if people cared for me to be happy; and I might, if but for a little while, be made the principal thing. I thought what it must be to have a life full of such care, and how some people had it, and some not. And then there was the walk down hill and up into the town with Allard.

I felt a little pleasant tingle of pride, when we met some

of the school-girls on the bridge, and he lifted his cap because I bowed to them. I could tell by the sound of their steps that they turned to look after they had passed us. It was a great thing to come upon Aunt Ildy at the street door, just going in from an errand, and to have her see him shake hands with me, and give me the flowers, which he had carried all the way, and hear him say he was sorry I could not have made a longer visit. I think I took on a kind of self-possession and elegance myself, being treated so; and that my parting bow and thanks had a South Side air that Aunt Ildy's lacked.

I took off my blue muslin, and put on my brown calico, and got my stocking basket, and sat down till tea was ready. I had been so happy that it was easy to be very good. I forgot all that had seemed hard and cruel, and looked upon it quite in a new light. I even tried to get some sympathy from Aunt Ildy in a pleasure that would not altogether be laid aside in silence. Or, rather, my pleasure so overflowed, like the little brook into which a generous rain has poured, that it made a glad little ripple over the very rock that hemmed it in.

"I had a beautiful time," I said. "Mrs. Cope was so good! And I think it was very nice of Allard to come home with me."

"The Copes are very polite," replied the rock; "and your Uncle Royle has always been thought a good deal of. Mr. Cope sits and talks with him in his little room about their books and politics. But I guess I wouldn't call that young man by his Christian name, if I were you."

How absurd I had been, and how ashamed I was! Those few words of Aunt Ildy's, and the tone of them, laid bare, and touched to wincing, possible and half-comprehended things; that which perhaps was in me, and perhaps was not, but of which I was certainly not conscious till her dry rebuke covertly accused me. Foolishly-raised conceit, presumption, forwardness, and something more, undefined,—unwarranted and ridiculous also,—a claim of familiarity, as if Allard Cope were anything, especially, to me! "That young man!" I did not know that I had thought of him as a young man before; he was only one of a delightful family, the nearest to my own age, who had shown me a graceful friendliness. Then

I remembered the girls upon the bridge ; and I analyzed my feeling there ; I blushed as I questioned if it had been quite free from silliness, and all the quick sensitiveness of fifteen shamed me before my own self-judgment, provoked to harshness by Aunt Ildy's blunt reproof.

In the midst of it all, though, I could not help secretly wishing that she could have known what he had really said ; that "I was such a pretty girl !" I made up my mind distinctly, however, that I would not call him "Allard" any more ; that to Aunt Ildy I would not speak about the Copes at all.

They must have talked it over at South Side ; and Angusta must have told them something ; for the next thing that happened was a regular coup d'etat.

Mr. Cope himself rode up to the office door one morning, and as a boy brought out his letters, he begged that Mr. Chism would come to him a moment.

I was getting out fresh linen from the chest of drawers in the front room above, and the windows were up, and the green blinds closed. I just heard the sound of their voices, at first, but I caught distinctly Mr. Cope's last words.

"Mrs. Cope has quite set her heart upon it ; she has taken a great fancy to your little niecee ; she will call this afternoon, and ask Miss Chism."

It was not natural to me to be secret and politic ; it went hard ; if I had had a dear mother, pleased with my pleasure, sure to allow all that was right and good for me, I should have run to her directly with this wonderful hint that I had heard ; and I think she would have helped me in my hopes and guesses ; but before Aunt Ildy I closed my mouth, and waited. I changed the bureau-covers and pillow-cases as she had bidden me ; I sat down quietly to my sewing ; by and by I laid the table for dinner, it being baking-day, and Lueretia busy. I was unusually silent, and I hardly dared let my eyes meet Aunt Ildy's ; I knew they would have sparkled if I did, and if I had opened my lips I should have sung.

Uncle Royle came in rather early, and told the whole before me. He did not know much how things went on upstairs ; he lived so in the store and office, and in his little room behind.

Mrs. Cope was intending to call on Aunt Ildy, and ask leave for me to come to them next week, and stay Thursday and Friday. The young ladies would have some younger cousins to entertain,—girls of my own age,—and would be obliged if I would come and help. There was not a large neighborhood then at South Side, and there was not swift communication far and near, as there is now. It had been in this way the Copes had used to come down for the Edgells.

"I suppose she can go," said Uncle Royle. "I told Mr. Cope so, and I think she'd better. It is a very particular attention. You'd like it, wouldn't you, Anstiss? It will do you good. There's never any harm in getting what one can of good society; and you don't have many pleasurings."

"I think you are very kind, Uncle Royle!" I answered, letting my grateful pleasure brim and tremble over in eye and voice. "May I, Aunt Ildy?"

I am afraid she felt almost insulted by this form of deference; but I could not help it; I must ask her; it would have been worse if I had not.

"It seems to be all settled," she replied, grimly.

"Oh, yes," said Uncle Royle, taking her innocently at her word. "Since you don't know of anything to prevent; and I supposed you couldn't." Uncle Royle did not see much, to be sure; but he had lived with Aunt Ildy all his life, and it is possible that in a simple way he was now and then inspired.

"I don't know what she's got to wear," Aunt Ildy remarked.

"There's time enough," said Uncle Royle. "If she wants a new gown, let her have it. I'll tell you what, Annie, you and I'll go shopping together this afternoon, while Aunt Ildy talks it over with Mrs. Cope."

It did not occur to Uncle Royle very often to interest himself directly in the plans and personal wants of people; when he did begin, he seemed to wake up to it as to a pleasure that he had been rather clever in discovering, and that was of easier attainment than he had supposed. He always went on from one thing to more.

"Your Uncle Royle says so and so," — "Your Uncle Royle

thinks best ;" these were often very decisive words in Aunt Ildy's mouth to me ; therefore, when he said so and so in my presence, or thought best to do anything thus out of his own head, she had the consistency not to actively oppose. But I think she felt herself circumvented.

Uncle Royle bought me a green and white narrow-striped silk, and told Mr. Norcross he might put up the " trimmings " with it ; the construction of which order was such that besides the cambric and linen and sewing-silk and hooks and eyes, there came home with the parcel two yards of ribbon and a yard and a half of thread lace. The whole cost thirteen dollars and a half ; it was in the good old times when six yards made a skirt, and a pretty summer silk cost but a dollar a yard. I wonder everybody did not wear silk then ; that, however, was reserved for the days of seventy-dollar dresses, that we have come to now. Now it is something worth while, and everybody brings it to pass. Cook-maids, in consequence, get their four dollars a week.

It seemed to me, then, a grand outlay ; I thought I was provided like a princess. Truly there was some poetry coming for me at last. It was like Miss Austen's heroines going to Loudon and Bath, to see the rich, gay world. I was just old enough to fancy that I might have fallen upon the title-page of my romance. Two days were an enormous time !

Aunt Ildy measured and pieced ; did her duty by the silk dress now that it was bought ; and her duty was never done until a piecing was got in somehow.

I ran the breadths, and covered bits of piping-cord ; then I was set at turning some old sheets, to keep my mind down to usefulness and every-day ; meanwhile my fancy was living those two glorified days at South Side, and crowding them with all possibilities of delight until they became a golden age of gladness. Years lay between me, already, and yesterday morning when the green and white silk dress was begun. Kept down to commonplace ? Every stitch in the old sheet was a grapple upon some fairy chain of imagination by which I climbed and climbed out of this every-day of mine into an illimitable paradise. They were magic hours, and it was the bean-stalk of the

story,—a common work done under a kitchen window, from which something grew and reached up until it touched the clouds. Up and down its flowering path I travelled. Aunt Ildy looked after the village dress-maker and her pieces and her threads of sewing-silk ; she thought me under a wholesome domestic discipline. Well, one half the world doesn't know what the other half is about, even when it has got it under eye and thumb.

The Copes came for me on Wednesday, just before tea. I had on my blue dress ; the new silk, and a purple-striped calico for mornings, were in Uncle Royle's old-fashioned black portmanteau, with some clean collars and pocket-handkerchiefs, and my night-things ; and the key was in my pocket. I was mistress of all this for two days ; only the invisible restraint of Aunt Ildy's admonitions and expectations went with me. That hangs about me to this day. I feel the old habitual twitch at my acquired conscience, every time I put on a fresh lace recklessly, or wear my best gloves, because the second-best have a rip in the finger.

Can I ever forget the exquisite pleasure it was to me when they put me in possession of that room up in the west wing, over the garden? Only for two nights' sleeping and two days' dressing ; and it was so much to me, such a beginning, that troubled itself with no end, and that I must fain linger over now, while the story of years in the after-life awaits to be remembered! This is the way, though, that we do remember. Point after point, as we find out its full meaning, perhaps, will all our life come back to us one day in like manner, when everything shall be great and full, measured by no moments of time, or any earthly comparison, but only by its relation to what has been in and from ourselves through its experience.

Place is so much to us. To me, at least, it always was : from the seat at school to the home one makes between four walls somewhere, long afterward ; and all the lesser and transient abidings that come between ! The corner in a stage-coach for a day's ride over the hills, or the better perch upon the springing roof ; the window in a rail-car ; the state-room in a steamer ; the nook in God's house that is our own, and where

we can always pray and listen best ; the earth under the trees of a cemetery, or on the sunny slope of a simple graveyard, where we shall lie down at last ! The best promise for the beyond : a “ place ” for us there, also.

All this from the thought of that pretty summer room into which the linden-trees rustled, and the breath of the white lilies came up from below.

The four corners were cut off, turning it into an octagon, and making little triangular closets and arched recesses before which curtains hung. In one of these last was the quaint little half-circular toilet, and the tilted round mirror above it, the draperies always looped back from before them ; everything in the room was of an antique grace, and made one think of the maidenhood of a past generation that had dwelt and decked itself here, and been beautiful in the old-time fashion. In another, stood the washing-stand, a wonderful little airy tripod, running up to hold a china basin in a light, polished rim of some dark, rich wood, while below, between the supports, was just a solid round big enough for the slender ewer. Beside, a towel-stand, tall and narrow, its three rods only as wide each as the folded damask that hung therefrom gleaming with glossy, delicate diaper of vine and clover-leaves. Above, tiny triangular shelves, with all the rest of the service and appliance needed.

I just stood still a minute and clapped my hands, when I was left alone. My pleasure was as full as if I had been to call it all mine from that time always. And why not ? It has been ever since. You cannot “ give and take away again,” into and from a life.

I heard Allard Cope go whistling down the stairs as I smoothed my hair. I heard a door open and a gay young voice, one of the cousins’, call to him and stop him. Then there were some little teasing words and questions, and a laugh, about something that had happened, or been foretold, or promised and forgotten, I forget what,—only a bit out of the life of a happy house into which I was coming,—and then presently steps returned toward my door, and Laura Cope came in to take me down to tea. Those two minutes, again, were not minutes. In them I entered into and enjoyed some-

thing that opened toward a rich and endless knowledge and duration.

They introduced me to Grace and Sarah Braithley, and gave me a seat between Augusta Hare and Sarah. Grandon Cope and his father came in from a ride as we sat down to our late, twilight tea. Grandon had a branch of wild blossoms for his mother, that he came up to lay beside her plate. He leaned over her close as he did so, and she looked up at him with a lovely light in her eye. Mrs. Cope was beautiful with her sons. I learned first from her what a full grace motherhood has ; how a woman only comes to her whole, rich fairness then, when the years sit upon her like a crown, and a love devotes itself to her that has grown up out of her own life and stands beside it now, no chance comer, but its very own, its perfecting and reward. I think the purest tenderness, the most chivalrous attending she can ever have, comes to her so ; and that no trick or grace of early youth, no coquettish queening of it in girl's beauty, can compare with the radiance and the winsome dignity that are upon her then.

The Copes were English in their origin and connection. Grandon had just come home from Cambridge, where he had been sent for his University education ; the whole family was making much of him, and the neighborhood looked on admiringly. After this summer stay he was going abroad again with his father, to visit the Continent, perhaps to remain and pursue some scientific taste he had in Germany. But his mother claimed him first, and he came all across the water, — a wearier way than now, — to bring her his fresh honors and his affectionate duty.

Grandon began again the little bantering with Allard, and brought his cousins upon him afresh. There was such a charm to me in this little sportive justle and antagonism between people who could afford, out of their wealth of heart-kindliness and true courtesy, to affect it for the fun of the moment, in which something half-serious was affectionately hid ! To be taken to task with a jest was such a different thing from the grinding earnest I was used to, — the fault-finding so real, so depressing, and down-holding ! Allard maintained his own,

and answered back with an adroitness that turned the tables, and brought the laugh — as genial as before — with him instead of against him. Even his father would let himself be conquered by a repartee, such as if I had ventured upon with Aunt Ildy would have been very nearly the end of all things. What was daring and defiant in me was the mere play and grace of life here among these happy children whose life had been allowed to grow. One good, perhaps, was meant by both methods. It was only the difference of ways. But to me it was all the difference between the branching growth kept nailed and trained against a wall, and the free tossing of green boughs in a gay, sunny orchard. Wall-fruit may be good ; some natures might never bear, perhaps, in other fashion. But I like the free flavor best.

It was only the family party to-night ; to-morrow there would be company at dinner and in the evening.

We all sat out on the terrace in the moonlight. I got as near to Mrs. Cope as I could. Sitting there, with the folds of her soft muslin dress lying lightly over and against mine, — she wore the prettiest dress to-night, figured with the tiniest old-fashioned sprigs of pale pinks, and round the hem and about the wrists just a narrow bit of ruffle of the same that looked so delicate and ladylike, so just like her, and in her belt, in the sweet, old, simple way, a nosegay, — I dreamed a sort of dream, thinking out a picture of a life such as might have been for me if Mrs. Cope, or anybody like her, had been my mother.

The faint image I had in my mind of a mother, gathered vaguely from dim association with all that had belonged to my own, and that was laid away in the high bureau in the front room at Miss Chism's, — was of something just so nice and delicate and sweetly pure, accompanied with some faint, never-absent, clinging sense of fragrance about all she wore ; not just perfumed, but taken out of careful folds from some drawer where rose-leaves had lain, and other sweet-smelling things had long ago been dropped among laces and linens, till all the old wood was full of a rare, gentle odor that would never leave it any more. And the repose and sweetness and perfumed grace of courtesy about Mrs. Cope were

something like these also, and as if they could fittingly array themselves in no other sort of outward vesture. Nothing new, just bought at the shops, and poured as a false, obtrusive anointing, about a common life; but an old ingrained sweet-ness of real roses that had been gathered long ago. The very word "mother," learned among fair relics, and beside gentle lives like this and Mrs. Hathaway's, sounded and savored of such things to me. If Miss Chism had been anybody's mother,—but that could never have been. Thank God, I never saw anything of motherhood but the beauty of it! So I know it the better, perhaps,—as we learn many things in this life that is only a life of types,—from having missed it.

Sarah Braithley proposed some quiet games that were new things then; games of intellect, such as I always liked. The Cope girls drew me out, and the soft, shielding moonlight and their mother beside me made me brave, and I took my part with delight. We grew merry over them, and I made quick answers, and everybody laughed, and I got excited, and I think I was rather brilliant for a child. Something, at any rate, always popped into my head when my turn came, and it got so at last that they rather hurried round to me to see what I would say; and sometimes one of them, in a puzzle, would make me find a reason or a word for them. Mr. Cope would say "Bravo!" and they would all give a well-bred, little, musical shout of laughter together at some of my sallies. Allard tossed the hard things toward me, and seemed especially proud when I succeeded. I think Allard always took to himself credit in these days for having found me out first, and behaved as if I somehow belonged to him particularly, by right of discovery. We were very jolly friends, and I was not a bit afraid of him; but I fairly trembled with a sort of scared triumph when Mr. Grandon Cope, who was so old and such a scholar, and of such consequence, joined in the glee and applause, and gave me special questions to try me. The idea of my surprising or amusing him! It seemed stranger to do this with him than with his father. Old gentlemen, somehow, are always kind and easily pleased; or else they are people just to be let alone, and there is the end of it.

I could be a little saucy, even, with Mr. Cope, for he patted me on the shoulder, and I knew I was only a little child to him. But Grandon treated me just as he did Augusta Hare, and it was something real and startling when he turned over his part in the game to me, and watched in earnest to see what I would make of it. It was only out of curiosity and for greater sport, of course; he could have answered all the questions if he had tried; but he gave up all effort deliberately at last, and came round behind his mother and me, and handed them regularly, as it were, over my shoulder, with, "Now?" "Miss Anstiss, why is it?" or, "Why do I? I'm sure I don't know."

He had a "thought" himself, at last, in "What is my Thought like?" And I told him it was like the toothache. At which, before his thought was declared, he laughed immoderately.

"I'm afraid it is — to you," he said; "but you'll have to tell me why. I thought of my stupidity. Now?"

"Because," I answered, in a very serious, tired way, "what can't be cured must be endured."

I had actually been saucy with him! I felt myself burn all over, as soon as I had said it, and a sort of horrible vision of Aunt Ildy and her day-of-judgment face rushed up before me.

"I couldn't help it," I stammered out. "It was all the answer there was."

"Of course it was!" he cried, and the second shout of laughter was more explosive than the first. Between the two I seemed to hear my little, blundering excuse dropping like an absurd echo. I could not play any more. Myself, measured by Aunt Ildy's estimation, stood, like a mean reality to shame my counterfeit, in the way of my new self-possession and brilliancy. As the Copes treated me, I had been raised to a higher and more happily assured sort of self; or, rather, I had not thought about myself, exactly, at all. In bright, pleasant exercise, when every muscle moves with a gladness, one does not think about the body. The physical life goes into the thing one is doing. Mental life works so

too, sometimes. I think I had often been least conscious of myself when, as I fancied afterward, my secondary conscience coming up, I had been most forward.

They saw that I had frightened myself; and perhaps they thought they had not been quite fair; I *know* they had really liked it, and had not been making fun of me, though I knew with the terrible insight that always haunted me and superinduced that state of conscience, that it was what Miss Chism would say; but they understood at once now; and they let the game drop, in a sort of glory to me, too, as if there was nothing more to be said after that; only Mr. Cope would now and then break out into a little after-laugh of his own, as if he could not quite get over it. Grandon and Mrs. Cope talked on with me a good while about a good many things. Nobody hushed up, or stopped suddenly, seeming as if they were shocked, or could imagine that they were supposed to be. It was so nice to be among people of nice perceptions.

Mrs. Cope kissed me when she said good-night. The soft lace lappet of her little cap touched my cheek, and that delicate, nameless odor of things exquisitely cared for came with my breath for an instant, and the word "mother" was in my heart again.

Augusta Hare went up when I did, and Grandon Cope gave us our candles, and held open the door for us.

It was an altogether different thing, and yet somehow it put me in mind of the good-nights at the Farm, and Richard Hathaway lighting a little lamp for me with a coal from the fireplace, and the going from the warm kitchen into the little press-room where I slept so safe. Was it so different? Or only the same sweet tune, played in a different key?

I lay awake for a time that seemed like hours. I suppose it might really have been one. My young brain was all awhirl with high excitement; it would not stop when the evening ended, but went on and on, over and over, with it all, in marvellous flashes of repetition.

Augusta Hare had said to me when she went away, "You got on famously, only don't break down in the midst again, as if you were a sort of Cinderella, and it had struck twelve."

That was just it. A fairy godmother gave me a beautiful dress, and lent me a bit of a beautiful life ; I could forget myself in it for a while ; but something jarred, and I was back in what I had lived in so long ; a sort of meanness and rags. I believe that is what the old fable means.

Yet the rags were the false things. How is it that they cling to people so ?

I went to sleep at last, and dreamed that everybody at South Side was out on the terrace, fitting on glass shoes ; nobody's would go on but mine ; and then everybody brought theirs to me, and I slipped my foot into every one ; and they all shouted and applauded, and brought me heaps and heaps ; till — crack ! away went one into shivers that Grandon Cope stood offering me, and at the same moment a great bell, with Aunt Ildy's eyes looking out of it, swung over my head, and seemed to crash through me as if I, too, were made of glass and shivering to splinters ; and then there was nothing left but my little old self in a dreadful bonnet that Miss Chism had pinned up with faded ribbons and broken straw, and I had a great rent in my dress, and my feet in shabby shoes, and Richard Hathaway came and led me away.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HOUSE-TOP.

NEXT morning we all — we girls, I mean — went down the garden and away into the lane after flowers and vines for the tables and baskets and vases. In the garden we got roses and white lilies, gay scarlet geraniums and great purple velvet pansies, and sprays of light vines, cypress, and creeping myrtle ; in the lane that ran with its banks of shade all along against the garden foot we found wealth of clematis and wild woodbine. Then we came back and made the house a bower. We sat in the long, cool hall, and cut our wreaths and assorted our clusters, and flitted back and forth, putting them about in the rooms ; and then we gathered up the refuse into a wide basket, and a housemaid carried it off, and brushed up every scrap from the white India matting ; and nobody was put out, and it seemed as if no labor had been done, or any “clutter” — that bugbear of Aunt Ildy’s stern house-keeping — had been made. Things seemed to work out and fall into order in this house, as I suppose they must in the kingdom of heaven.

Afterward, we had a long morning in Mrs. Cope’s room.

When I think of these times, I remember every little detail, and I cannot help dwelling upon them all and living them over. They were so much to me. They made an atmosphere of living into which I can seem to go back with the thought of them. Things have this power with me that impress me at all. Books do it ; and people whose experience I have entered into by a sympathy that had its root often in the longing of my nature for the same. A breath of pleasantness across the commonest day of my own living, a puff of summer air even, or the smell of a pink, or the clearing up after a shower, will bring up a subtle essence of all these things to me, the spirit of which I

have been gathering from here and there, even while the letter was denied me. I am old enough now to have learned that we don't want the letter half the time. It is true in this way also, that it sometimes killeth. It is the spirit only which giveth life. The world is but a show of things; a kindergarten, where we learn by object-lessons. It is only the very little ones to whom the object is all.

Augusta dressed my hair for dinner, in quite a grown-up style, making a long French twist of it, and gathering the ends of that which she parted at the front in clusters of little curls, to fall behind my ears. She put a white rose with green leaves against the coil of the twist at the side, and a few buds and leaves, for a breast knot, upon the lace which fell over my silk dress from around my throat. Her own hair was done in a low round coil behind, and carried back from the front in wide-looped, heavy braids, in which she had woven some white cypress blossoms that looked like little stars.

I had never been at a regular dinner before. It was like a feast served in the "Arabian Nights." The still coming and going of the servants, the noiseless changing of plates and dishes, the delicate garnishings, the simplicity of the elegance that made even me feel in five minutes as if it were such a matter of course, and a thing I had so long been used to,—all this was different from any "having company" that I ever saw before.

With Aunt Ildy "company" was a kind of a fever. From the baking of the cake to the getting out of the best china, it was a succession of crises; and there was no knowing what turn any of them would take. We stopped *living* beforehand, and took it up again when the company was gone. The interval was an abnormal condition. Here, into a beautiful, established living, friends came, and that was all. In this again there was a strange reminder, even with a contrast, of Hathaway Farm. There you "dropped in, laid off your things, and stayed;" and everything was always ready. So people borrowed a little freshness from each other, and got really something out of each other's sphere and story. In the other fashion, "taking tea out" was being out; you got

into nobody's home ; one place was like another ; you might as well go and sit upon a fence between your fields.

Allard Cope sat by me at the table ; and when we left the dining-room and scattered ourselves in the hall and library and drawing-room while cups of tea and coffee were being carried about, he took me out on the broad front steps, and the other younger ones came too, and we sat there chatting and laughing in the soft dusk that was rather a glow between the fulness of day and the night-radiance that was coming.

Mr. Grandon Cope had gone up into a little room that was his in the half-story in the roof. He had a telescope here, and a flight of steps ran up through a skylight window to the flat centre of the house-top. He was going to take out and fix his instrument, and show us by and by the conjunction of Jupiter and the moon.

"If you like, that is," said Allard, carelessly, telling us. "I don't think I'm anxious. The planets can take care of themselves ; they're pretty sure to be in the right places ; I'd as lief take Gran's and the Almanac's word for it, and look after the conjunctions down here."

Allard was not a bit like Grandon ; he was clever enough, and he would always be a gentleman ; he would have that nameless grace of society that shapes one's orbit in it and makes it bright and wide ; he would be satisfied with this, and leave, as he said, the planets and such matters to take care of themselves.

But the crown of a man's manhood to me is some insight or authority or knowledge that puts him above the ordinary plane of every-day things ; he must take hold somewhere, spiritually or intellectually, upon the things of God.

There was a great chair-swing in one of the lindens, in which two of us could sit together ; we went out to it presently, and Allard sent Sarah Braithley and me tossing up into the branches.

We stayed here under the deep boughs, taking our turns in the swing, till it grew quite dark in the shadows ; darker than we had thought it would be on this bright night, though there

was an hour yet before moonrise. The wind was coming up, too, stronger, out of the south.

Before we thought of going in, it had got to be so that there was only the gleam of our light dresses to see each other by. The great tree, arching down on every side to the deep grass, made a mysterious gloom, into which we could seem to look as into an immense distance where sight lost itself. Swinging out toward the verge, we saw the bright house-lights twinkle suddenly, and then go out as we dropped back into the thick shade.

There were only Kitty Cope, the Braithleys, and I. Augusta and Laura were singing in the drawing-room.

Suddenly, across the music, there came a deep, low roll, and the quick leaves rustled with a wind that ran sharply through them.

"I felt a drop upon my foot. It rains!" cried Kitty, out of the swing, coming back from a long flight.

Allard caught the chair-frame, and ran after it as it swept on in a fresh vibration, bringing it back with him to a stop. The two girls slid out, and we all started for the house. Before we got there, there came a streak of quick flame across the darkness, and a peal of near thunder smote the air. Great drops began to fall. A cloud had rushed up out of the hot south-west, where flickers of heat-lightning had been playing, and hung above us; only the heavy border rolled up now, against the dim-lighted east. Just as we sprang upon the bank, somebody shut the hall door. They were pulling down sashes hastily, all around, inside, and running up and down as people do in a great, open house when a summer storm comes up. Nobody thought of our being out. Whoever came to the door saw no one on the broad porch or steps, and there it was fast with a catch-lock. Allard pulled the bell, but the servants were upstairs shutting bedroom windows now, and whoever else heard it may have fancied it a summons only to some fresh point within.

"We might as well run round," he said; and we all turned, at first, to go with him. But the path among the trees, around the whole front half part and wing, was something to

undertake with great drops driving faster, and the lightning quivering overhead. I was afraid of the storm, and—I remembered my new silk dress. "Green would run," I had heard Aunt Ildy say when it came home. So I stopped short, and waited, standing close up in the shelter of the door. I knew they would let me in when they got round.

But they did not miss me at the first, when they all ran in together from the terrace and mingled with the rest, thinking that I of course had followed.

I had time, all alone, to see a fearful blaze, to hear a close hissing, and a crash, a splintering down through something, and an explosion that enveloped all. I had time, after that, to ring vehemently and to call, and to fling myself against the door with a frantic feeling that I must, somehow, get behind it,—put it between me and the storm. And then Grandon Cope opened it, and I fell forward, and he caught me up and lifted me in.

"You poor child!" he exclaimed, amazed and commiserating. "How in the name of wonder came you there?"

And after that he took care of me all the evening.

Augusta Hare was by his side as he opened the door. She told the story afterward better than ever I could, and made more of it. Her sensation of the shock, her belief that the house itself was struck, the sudden pealing of the bell, and the falling of something against the door, and their pulling me in, half senseless, so that she thought at first glimpse of me that I was killed: you saw the picture, as you always did, from her stand-point, and she was better than the foreground. I had my fright and my dim recollection of an instant alone with the storm; but I had nothing to tell. It was an old poplar tree, across the road, that had been struck. It was the first time in my life that I had felt how near the terrible element might come. It was not to be the last.

Grandon Cope took care of me all the evening. I don't mean that he held me in his arms, or sat by my side; Augusta did these things; but he came and went, with something to show me, or a word to say that reassured me, every little while. There were other things to do, too. Other guests

were terrified ; were anxious about their drives home, and their horses ; the storm continued, close and sharp about us, for an hour. Amusement and conversation were given up ; people only watched the keen returning flashes, and listened for the hope of longer intervals between them and the reverberations that shook the building.

I shrank and trembled at every one; but I said nothing. I was too strengthless with dread for a while to cry out as others did, or to ask questions. It was the more thoughtful in Grandon Cope to soothe me so, and to help me gradually to a reasonable sort of courage ; even, at last, to a positive enjoyment, in what would else have stamped itself irretrievably upon my young nerves as a terror never to be conquered.

“There is very little fear,” he said, standing by the arm of the sofa, as a long, fierce rattle died away ; “the biggest of us only furnishes six feet or so of conducting power ; it will always get hold of something better when it can. Just see that you don’t make yourself a link in a chain ; that is all you have to do.”

If he had said there was *no* danger, it would not have comforted me at all ; but the “very little” and the reason why,—these helped me to my first long breath.

“I was up on the roof when it began ; I had my telescope to bring down. I’m sorry our astronomy was spoiled tonight.”

“Oh, I wanted so to look through the telescope !” I cried, remembering my anticipations, and that I must go home tomorrow.

“There may be a chance yet. It’s only a bit of a cloud in the way. When you think of the stars waiting just the same beyond, it seems a very little fizz, doesn’t it ?”

“Perhaps it does,” I said. “But then, *we* are very little ; ever so much littler, you know ; and we are right *in* the fizz !”

Mr. Cope laughed.

“Think of something yet less, then. Think of all the little birds in their nests ; and how they will sing, hundreds of them, when the sun comes up to-morrow morning.”

"Ah, that's a comfort," said I, my long breath going out with a sigh. I did not think of it then, and I don't know whether he did, but I have remembered it since; that it was the very comfort Christ gave us himself. "Not a sparrow falleth;" and "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." He translated God's special words to us, written in his creation; and they always stand.

"It is better to face it," Mr. Cope said, coming again by and by. "Then you know where it really is, and what it is about. When it's just overhead, you can't, of course; but that seldom comes, and never lasts long; and it's no use to sit fancying it overhead. Come this way with me, won't you? We'll watch it off."

He led us—Augusta came too—into the library, and pulled seats for us into the great bay-window. The blinds were all open,—I believe he had been in and set them so on purpose,—and away toward the north the mass of cloud was drifting, and showed itself to us by rosy sheets and golden chainwork of gorgeous lightnings that illumined and embroidered it.

"It is the purple lightning that is dangerous," Augusta said. "When it grows red like that, it is passing over."

"The distance changes the effect. The close blaze is livid and blinding. Look!"

Overlapping edges of great banks of piled-up vapor were grandly shown by sudden darting flames that seemed to run along their curves, and bury themselves behind the bosom of blackness. Back and forth, each to each, they flashed their magnificent telegraphy, and between them rolled the incessant voice of thunders. All around the mid-sky and the horizon, settling momentarily lower, and wheeling northward, lay the receding showers; while here, about us, only a few great drops, flashing from roof and branches, came from overhead. Yet the bright gleams shone vivid across the night, and the echoing peals swelled now and then to sudden crashes.

"I told you this was better," said Grandon Cope. "Half of them in the other rooms think we are in the midst of it still."

"You see the chief of the business lies between themselves,

after all," he said again, reaching his hand toward the heaping clouds making their dazzling interchanges. "There is the whole heaven to sweep through; and, at the worst, hundreds of objects beside one's self in the little radius it may most threaten."

"I never can realize that," said Augusta. "I forget other houses and other people. I always feel, somehow, as if I and the thunder-cloud had it all between us."

"It doesn't always do to centralize one's self," said Grandon Cope. He looked at her as he spoke, in an earnest sort of way I had seen in him with her before, already. He seemed somehow to study Augusta Hare.

What she said of the thunder-cloud was true of her relation with persons, with pursuits, with whatever of especial was about or going on. She and this, whatever it might be, were for the time the two centres,—the foci. They had it all between them. Life lay round her so, in a continual ellipse. Society conformed itself in such-wise almost always where she was. She and one other, her objective,—perhaps a person, perhaps only the amusement or the topic,—would gradually get their bearings, and the whole movement would seem to swing about them. She would make a lecturer or a preacher, preach or lecture to herself, before the utterance was half through. The whole audience might not find this out, but the speaker would, and a few about her would discover themselves less listening, than watching how she listened. I have said that this was her attitude, always, with events. I do not think she could possibly help it. It was a magnetism—a temperament. I do not know that she might not readily have drawn a danger so, if a danger were the thing to be drawn. But if a rescue came, it would come to her. She was always lucky in a lottery. She held high trumps at whist, pairs royal at commerce, and threw the numbers that made the play at backgammon. There is a philosophy and a law in these things.

"One gets more out of life so," she answered.

"Unless one can live large enough to feel from many centres."

"I don't think one can be both diffusive and intense," said she.

But Augusta Hare's intenseness was only at the self-point. She was always *one* centre ; but the ellipse might wheel itself bodily about, and embrace any new second that she chose, or even that chanced.

I thought sometimes, afterward, that it might have been a problem like this that Grandon Cope was studying.

It was not by obtrusiveness, or chatter, or assertion, that Augusta did it ; she had infinite tact, and exquisite breeding. To-night, for instance, she said so little ; and I myself was apparently the object of Grandon Cope's solicitous interest ; but he was helping her ; I was her charge ; she was quite taken up with managing me beautifully, I being the thing just then to be managed ; it was just the two centres and he revolving about us.

After the guests had gone and we went upstairs, Augusta walked down the long upper hall to the south-east window at the end, that opened out on a little balcony. She pushed up the sash,—for the air had grown warm and heavy inside, being shut up so during the storm,—and stepped through.

She gave just one exclamation of a passionate delight.

"Oh, glorious!" she cried, not suddenly, but with a slow, strong dwelling on the words.

There was something in the tones of Augusta's voice of a strange, peculiar quality. They were, in a fashion, ventriloquial. She never shouted ; she never called to people loudly ; she did not raise her utterance above the gentle musicalness that should be a woman's ; but it penetrated, and went just whither she would. It arrested you like the low bell-tinkle of some ringing instrument, introduced into a full-crashing orchestra ; there were twenty louder, but this was of itself, and marked the pulse of the harmony. That was how it seemed even in a buzzing crowd ; but when she chose to speak like this, across a few chance words and laughs, such as were sounding about the stair-head as the girls gathered there, it shot straight through them all to the point she meant that it should reach.

Grandon Cope walked down the gallery too, and came out there to her side.

"There she is," Augusta said, pointing straight away, where, in a depth of midnight blue, between white rifts of clouds, at about thirty degrees above the south-easterly horizon, hung the moon, four days past her full ; and close beside her,—an asterisk of glory to point her to men's eyes,—the imperial planet ; small, intense, with his sixteen hundred times' distance, but mighty in his splendor to prevail across it all.

Augusta Hare and that picture in the heavens ; they had it between them, now.

She stood still and gazed, while the chatting went on at the stairway ; while one or two came and glanced over our shoulders,—I had gone out also,—uttered some word of admiration, and were content to return, since the little balcony could not hold them all, and their jest or story was not done with yet ; until they got inside their rooms that opened one into another so that they might talk there half the night ; and then she said :—

"If the telescope were here now, Mr. Grandon !"

"It would be better on the roof ; the balcony is narrow, and the window-sash is in the way ; would you mind coming up ?"

There was nothing to object to, of course ; it was only a sort of study and observatory that he had up there ; we were all to have gone up if the weather had been fine ; people were still moving below, and would be ; lights were burning ; the doors from the girls' rooms were not even shut upon the gallery ; the evening was not over, only the party was, and it was just near enough the coming night-stillness to be beautiful.

Augusta did not hesitate an instant ; if she had, from that moment there would have been an objection ; she said at once with the utmost simpleness :—

"I should like it exceedingly ; and to show Annie, too ; for she goes to-morrow."

"That is too soon," said Grandon Cope, kindly, and I took what fell to my share, and went upstairs, quite happy, after those two.

It was beautiful to be a woman grown, though, like Augusta, and to stand on a level with a man like Grandon Cope ; to talk freely, and to dare to have opinions, and to get his ; I with my fifteen-years-old brain and heart had my questions and longings, and there had never been anybody in all my life to meet and answer them.

“They were behind it all ; just as you said !”

The words seemed only to escape Augusta, hardly to be addressed to him, as she stood there by the low roof-railing, while he mounted and adjusted the instrument.

“Yes ; there is no mistake, in all these wonderful heavens. And the clouds know their places too, as well. I think we needn’t be afraid !”

He seemed to say this last rather to me, in a half-playful way, but Augusta answered it. With this strong, serious man, she could be serious too ; less strong ; that was her charm, doubtless.

“But terrible things happen. And we can’t see what the evil is for.” So she touched the great, troubled, unanswered question ; and looked to him as if he might haply solve it.

“It takes thousands of years records to prove the compensation for disturbance yonder,” Grandon Cope replied, with his face toward the stars. “God works at an infinite diagram.”

It was like a thought that had come to him so in his daily pursuit and research that it was quite familiar. He spoke without a change of manner, and the next moment he turned to me, as I stood waiting eagerly by his side.

“I think you’ll have it now. Look here.”

I knelt down on a cushion he had brought, and looked, and saw. Congealed shapes and wonders ; frost-work, or molten work, or some strange, unknown, luminous matter, caught and arrested in a thousand midway forms ; a world, seen just near and far enough to show its whole rough idea and outline ; its finish and detail beyond our vision, or yet to come ; it made me think of glowing, unshaped metal from a forge ; it was like seeing a piece of God’s work on his anvil.

And then Mr. Cope just touched his finger to the tube, with hardly the pressure of a breath, and lo ! the disk changed ;

the lustrous mass swept suddenly from the field, leaving to sight only a jagged curve and gleaming points ; and I saw, white, and round, and infinitely far, — a drop, as it were, not of flame, but its essence, — a something clear like a sun, and compact like a pure and perfect thought, — the planet poised in ether ; firm in the grasp of awful force, still in the eternal rush and fall of its tremendous motions.

What I knew and what I saw put themselves together so, and showed me this.

“The satellites cannot be seen, of course,” said Augusta, coming to take my place as I moved away, like one who has no right to linger, being presented to majesty.

Her words seemed trivial, somehow.

“No,” Grandon answered. “He is like some great prince from a far kingdom, laying aside his retinue and state in courtesy to the little queen whom he salutes to night.”

I could see Augusta’s smile in the moonlight. It pleased her, this readiness and grace. This was what passed current in the world, and bought there what it would.

She valued him at once too little and too much. I saw it then. She could not reckon his whole worth. She discounted, as brokers do a foreign coin.

He shifted round the tube, and showed us other glories. He pointed it low to the north-west, and found the golden locks of Berenice, clustered stars of the fourth magnitude, faintly traceable by the naked eye ; he wheeled a little southward, as the summer heavens cleared, and brought us face to face with white, resplendent Arcturus ; far southward still, and lo, Altair, glittering between the wings of the Eagle ; eastward a little to Delphinus, beautiful lozenge of four diamonds, and Markab, flashing from the shoulder of the Flying Horse. He showed us double stars, and bright shining nebulae, the dust of which the worlds are born ; he made us note the various-colored fires of different suns, red, golden, and pale blue. He told us of the wonderful violet splendor of Sirius, fairest of all those far-off orbs, shining now upon the under-world, and coming towards us with the morning ; of the double stars of Orion ; of Rigel that clasps his ankle, marking his stride

through heaven, and Betelgeuse that sits upon his shoulder, an epaulet of pride ; of the Pleiades and Aldebaran, magnificent in the Bull ; and it was midnight, and Capella shone on the north-eastern rim of the now cloudless blue, before we be-thought us, and went down.

The girls were laughing still, and the servants' steps yet sounded in the lower rooms ; but in half an hour more the house was still, and I was falling into strange dreams ; of Augusta Hare and Grandon Cope walking with winged feet among the constellations, and of myself, wistful and wondering, looking up at them from beneath.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT A VOICE TELLS.

OF HOPE DEVINE.

SHE was only washing dishes in a kitchen sink ; they were heaped all around her, and the great pan steamed in the middle ; she had a long towel over her arm, and her hands moved swiftly to and fro, dropping cups and saucers deftly into the scalding water, and catching them out by the edges that she tipped toward her with her mop-stick ; swirling the cleansing suds around and within them almost by the same movement, and then transferring them to the comforting folds of the soft, coarse linen out of which they came instantly, glittering, and dropped with a single ringing touch, — no clatter, — each to its own polished pile upon the white, dry table at the side.

Only washing dishes, — Hope Devine ; but doing it, as she did all things else, and as nobody else did anything. No bigger thing sat tilting upon a smaller ; no crumbs and fragments, crushed and smeared together, made the work repulsive ; there was a magnetism of order in what she touched, and a visible tending toward completion ; you could see through it, standing by ; she saw through it, by an instinct, from the beginning. So no work ever looked hard or hopeless to her, or where she set her hand. She was quick to see not only into things, but on to what they were to be ; if you were to put her faculty into a single word that should betray its secret, you would call it *onsight*.

She was therefore never discouraged ; washing dishes, or living her life ; she never stopped short in the middle, balked by difficulty or default. She made things do ; there was al-

ways enough ; it "came out" or it "went in" somehow, as she said, and meant it should ; by the pure force of will, Mrs. Hathaway thought sometimes. "I suppose you see it; I don't," she would say. Mrs. Hathaway thought "she had never come across such a girl to learn in her life. She didn't learn ; she just jumped at it."

"There's that sitting-room carpet," she told everybody. "Why, there seemed to me to be yards of it good for nothing, and not a scrap left like it except the piece laid down before the fireplace, and a bit at the door. Hope stood in the middle, and looked at it, after we'd spread it down. 'I see how it goes,' said she. 'I don't believe you do, for it *don't go*,' says I, half cross. 'Yes,' says she, right off, as spry and pert as a peeping chicken. 'Look here! You don't want any under that great sideboard. That's a good breadth up against the wall. Take it out and put it in the middle. Then the worn-out piece in the middle (it was *worn out*, to be sure, for it was a great *hole*, and no piece at all) can be cut across, and the rest put each way from the sideboard. Then those two ends by the doors can be taken off; and the rug pieces matched on; and there's enough good along the selvages in the old ends to make out that narrow strip against the hearth that's ragged. You'll see!' So I just let her go to work, and I helped her rip, and cut, and match, and catch-stitch, and darn; and it fairly *flew* together; seemed as if every piece knew where 'twas wanted; and she sat laughing, and telling some fairy tale about birds' feathers of every color and kind that sorted themselves in heaps and were ready in no time, and by night we'd a bran-new carpet out of those rags. She sees through a day's work, or a week's, just so; and 'tisn't so much her moving quick that does it, as a kind of faith, the mustard-seed kind, I truly believe. It's like turning a stocking; she puts her hand in at a Monday morning and catches a Saturday night by the heel, and pulls it through, and there it is!"

She was only washing dishes ; but there was the sort of pleasure in seeing her do it, that there is in watching a pianist's fingers, touching always, and so swiftly, the right keys ;

or an artist, laying his pencil here or there, leaving firm lines and just shadows ; or any other sure and dexterous thing that is done, in art or industry, or for a beauty. I think the sound or sight that is born of the work is only the record that it leaves ; it is the achieving that we think of secretly ; the touch of faith and *onsight*.

Richard Hathaway came and stood in the doorway, looking at her.

"I like to see you work, Hope," said he.

Hope worked on, with a smile lightening and lingering upon her face ; and a little color that came with it warming her cheek ; as if a sun-ray had streamed in and smitten her.

"I'm going up to Longmead this afternoon," he said again, "to drive back the new horse. It's a grand, pleasant day. Wouldn't you like to go?"

Richard Hathaway never felt a pleasantness that he did not seek to share with somebody.

"Certain," said Hope, in a quaint, happy, little incorrect way she had of speaking. Out of her books, and from daily intercourse with plain, unprecise people, she had gathered an odd mixture of cultured and uncultured speech, that perhaps expressed what she was, better than any more consistent style could have done.

"Certain I should. And it's good of you, Richard."

These were her thanks. Uttered very much as if it were good of him of course, and for unnumbered times, and hardly need be said ; as we say other thanks, perhaps. But the sunshine deepened rosier up her cheeks, and glanced in her eyes, like light through a clear amber wine ; flushed and glanced still, after Richard had gone away again.

Hope was seventeen, now. Five years she had lived with the Hathaways. Martha went and came, in this time ; up the country to an invalid sister, helping her "fix up the children, and see to David Henry's clothes ;" or "lifting them along through haying-time," or a "spring-cleaning ;" home again for a "winter spell," or to do the June butter-making. Mrs. Hathaway could always spare her best just when she wanted to go, and was "proper glad" to see her back, because of

something that was just afoot at that time. And in this household where all things chanced "as well as not," and usually better, Hope's sunny nature fitted itself in with other bright things, and shone on; and she pulled her Saturday nights through from her Monday mornings, and the two ends met, and the life was rounded, and its work complete, piece by piece, as it went on.

She lived by weeks and days; for doing and for having what she *could* see; she did not trouble herself about the years; she never tried to pull *them* through.

"What if Mrs. Hathaway should die?" Other people said this, speaking of Hope and of her home at the Farm; but it never crossed her thought. "Or if Richard—" people speculated about him too, still, though he was seven and twenty, and pretty Lucy Kilham was married and gone out to Ohio, long ago; but Hope never did; she just let the sunshine touch her as it came, and flushed and ripened under it like a peach in a south shelter. If she ever thought of what she had not, it was as of a great reserve out of which all good might come; not as of a wealth withheld.

"Hope lives in the middle of her pasture," said Richard Hathaway of her once. "She doesn't go fretting her neck over the fence."

Old Putterkoo went comfortably jogging along over the Hill Road; taking her own pace and time. Coming home, there would be a young horse in the thills, and she would have to keep up behind; this, with an easy pull now, would be a half day's work for her.

Hope sat in her linen cape and sun-bonnet, with a shawl on her lap for the return drive, happy and simple like a child. To be out in the fresh June air, full of growth and sunshine,—to loiter along between acres square of mellow ploughed grounds rich with deep brown furrows full of seed, green mowings where every lithe stem stood instinct with full, springing, juicy life, and the sweet grass-smell was more delicate than flowers, and vivid grain-fields glowing with young green; over slow rise of long hills down whose farther sides they came into new beauty of open farms or green

depths of woodpatches; across singing brooks,—through them, now and then, for Putterkoo to wet her dusty hoofs, and the clear water to splash up over hub and axle, and drip with flash and tinkle from spoke and tire; past still, lovely glade-openings into shadows among old pines, where a foot-path or a cart-track wound away into the wood-lots, and the ground was blue with tender summer violets, all along the barest road-side, where nothing was bare, but the wide way-borders, crisp with short pasture-grass, were starred everywhere with delicate houstonias, white like snow or purple with intenser life;—every step was a joy, every breath a leaping growth of soul and body in God's bountiful world of light and fragrance.

"Are you afraid of Pitch Hill, Hope? I brought you round this way for the prospect. Such a day as this, you'll see over three counties. There"—and he pointed with his whip-lash—"over that crown you'll get it."

Straight before them lifted the long ridge up whose sides they had been winding, with green turf-rim, and gray boulders marking the sky-line close above, that should widen out presently with a burst and take in a sweep of a hundred miles.

Hope was looking down, and along her side the way. The blue wild geranium grew in heaping clusters hard by where the wheels ran. Along a mossy old fence sprang a striped squirrel, sitting quizzically upon each post as he came to it, for a flash of time, and then darting on. A bobolink, with his pied clown costume and his gay chatter, cracking some bird-joke, swung up and down on a last year's golden-rod, near where his mate, doubtless, brooded her eggs. All these things came in the near range of Hope's vision, and the summer tenderness and bounty held them all.

"Every inch of it is beautiful," she said, answering Richard Hathaway's talk of three counties. "See there, and there, and there!"

Richard dropped the reins upon her hands, without stopping the horse, and sprang out over the wheel. He gathered handfuls of blue geraniums, with two or three quick clutches, sprang in again, and laid them in her lap.

Hope looked up and thanked him, with the child-happiness brimming in her face.

"You make the most of it all, as you go, Hope. You aint in any hurry for the top."

Hope laughed. "That would be botching," said she.

"Botching?"

"Yes; as the little children do their patchwork. Hurrying to the end of the seam and not minding the little stitches. Then the whole seam is good for nothing, you see."

Richard Hathaway sat still, and began to whistle. It put things in his head. Hope's words were apt to. The things in his head were not words, only glimpses. They did not come often to what he could utter back. But they were there; glimpses of years, now, that people botched, looking for ends and new openings, and missing the wayside sufficiency and joy. Something vaguely reminded him of Anstiss Dolbeare, looking for things beyond, reaching on, with a pain, and a far sight, not able to be quite content. If he had gathered blue geraniums for her, would her face have been full, like Hope's?

"How I like the little birch-treecs!" Hope exclaimed. "Every small leaf seems so glad. The others are in great heaps, grand against the sky. But the sunshine and the wind get in all around every one of these, and they all dance and shine, on their own bits of stems."

She talked on, never thinking that she did think, or that she spoke. The current of beauty ran through her as it ran through all. Richard said nothing, and she missed nothing that he should have said. Was he not there, also, with, it all?

Hope Devine was happy. Her blessed temperament was in direct line and relation with all sweet electric influences. Richard Hathaway yearned for the other nature, high and gentle and tender also, but sad with a hard repression, restless with unanswered desire. He had known it and pitied it, so, all through his life, and had been trying, in his way, to make up to it what it lacked. And he knew there was something that he could not give it; something it would never be quite at peace without. He knew it all, and she herself

knew not how well he knew. His large heart was full of a mute understanding, and a longing for himself and her. And to her he seemed but simple, kind, uncomprehending.

This was the Silent Side.

Going on, always, along with her own life, feeling its impulses, asking the same questions, humbly, mutely; not able to turn round upon her from a height, and hold down strong hands to lift her up.

When do we lift each other up? Must we gain a height first, or can we reach up our feebleness together to the Hands that do offer us a mighty help from on high?

Counterparts? Affinities? We may go looking for them, and we may chance, some of us, to think we find them; but the tender patience of human souls in a common need is the true affinity; and God has given humanity its one Complement in his Son.

Anstiss Dolbeare did not know; Richard Hathaway could not tell; so the prose of her life went on, and here in a silence covered over with a plain, unfigured living, lay the syllables that might have filled the measure and made it musical with rhyme. In the kingdom of heaven, these harmonies utter themselves all the while that we are ignorantly jangling and missing them here. Some time, when we wake to them, they shall sweep over the soul in tears.

“I wish we had Anstiss Dolbeare at the Farm this June weather,” he said to Hope, who knew nothing of the hidden links that joined the thought of her with what they had been saying of the birch leaves, and the blue geraniums, and the wayside pleasantness, but supposed that quite a new subject had suggested itself to Richard. Underground currents and apparent gaps! If they could be traced and bridged with their secret continuities! Histories write themselves out all around us, with only a few words in heart cipher here and there, that we cannot read to make them plain.

“She ought to be here to go strawberrying on Red Hill,” Hope answered.

Hope was as true as she was strong. She had a little imperceptible pause with herself before she made this answer;

and, making it, she spoke precisely her feelings, and no more. It was not, "I wish so too," or "Oh, if she could!" but "She ought to be."

And yet Hope did not wish, actually, otherwise; Anstiss Dolbeare had been many a time at the Farm since the day that Hope had stood on the wharf at New Oxford, and Richard Hathaway had come for her to take her away into her new life, and felt as if he had picked up a sunbeam; and the girls were friends. Real friends; for Anstiss was of too earnest and seeking a nature, and Hope too frank and genuine, for them to be anything at all to each other, unless this; but somehow Hope felt herself at hard work when Anstiss came and stayed. There was a something here to be made out, pieced together, "made to go," that was worse than the old carpet. In her own life, Hope could deal with the elements, and see her way through, in her happy fashion, bit by bit, which was all that she wanted; inert material, circumstance, fell to her bright will; but here was the antagonism of utterly different temperament, unabsorbent, often, of the sweet cheer of hers; unperceptive, sometimes, of the whole good that there might be for itself.

Hope did not know just what it was; she felt, with her nice instinct, that there was a something to be adjusted; and as if her little office in the grand economy were just the instant righting of all the atoms about her, she could not be at peace with their disturbed polarity. There was some uncomprehended sense, too, of dim loss and trouble to herself; in herself, rather; she was too unselish to be able to look at it objectively; but the full, free joy of her life got a little stray ache into it somehow, she could not tell how; she could scarcely tell where she felt it. Some people lose and suffer, even unto the end, without knowing anything, but that, as Mrs. Gradgrind would have said, "there was a pain somewhere" in the world, and it might be possible that it was theirs.

At nineteen, all the strong, unsatisfied longings of the child had grown, with Anstiss Dolbeare, into the passionate striving and demand of the woman's nature. And the old life was round her

still. Its contradictions, its half opportunities, its withholdings, its snatchings away. An unseen beauty and wealth lay, as well, about her very feet, if she would only stoop or kneel to find it. But lifting her face up always in a far-asking and importunate prayer, she set, as it were, her tread upon it, and passed on in her pain, telling herself, always, *her half* the story ; saying over the old, rough lines of life, unrecognizing their hint of a grand, beautiful measure, and calling them hard prose.

Hope had a vague suggestion in herself of the unfound rhymes. Only she could not rhyme for another. And the strange jangle meddled with her own song.

So she said only, "She ought to be here." The June blessedness and Anstiss Dolbeare, — these "ought" to come together. Ah, the old, homely proverb about the horse and the water ! You may plunge a soul into heaven itself, and the pores of its being may be closed against the divine ether.

Anstiss Dolbeare was stirred and kindled, as always, by all beautiful things ; stirred, but not satisfied ; only reminded, continually, of that which might be and was not. Spiritual far-sight was her disease. Just a touch of myopia is a safer and a happier thing. That cures as one grows old ; the other aggravates as the lenses flatten, till the lines of light fall wide, and there is blankness.

"We'll ask her out ; we'll go for her in the new wagon with Swallow, — you and I." Richard almost always drew Hope into such plans, in these days ; he was shy of asking Anstiss, as he used to, to go off with him alone.

He stopped the horse on the top of Pitch Hill, as he spoke ; a swift afternoon breeze met them, and passed them by over the brow ; all the rich breath of the fields and forests and gardens was in it, borne up here out of a wide champaign over which summer was bursting, and sunlight had brooded warm for hours.

It smote upon every sense, that magnificent outspread ; such a great piece of the beautiful earth at once ; and such a depth and width and glory of heaven reaching up above, and gently down round about it !

Forests and river-glimpses ; still, blue ponds lying in beautiful curves ; spires white and slender, pointing only a little way, after all, like a child's finger, into the fathomless ; houses gathered together, here and there, a tiny sprinkle of human life in the midst of the wide, rioting, redundant lesser life that feeds it ; road-ways winding everywhere along the hill-sides and across intervals, losing themselves in green shadows and down valley-hollows ; no entire track traceable straight through to anywhere, but bends and stretches and bits gleaming out indicatively ; with now and then a wagon laboring along, or a swifter vehicle rolling across the open, visible a little way and then covered in again. Cattle in soft-sloping pastures ; birds traversing the blue air ; a crow slow-flapping, low, over a corn-field ; sounds of mingled songs and hums and rustlings and ripplings coming up from all in a pleasant far-off, nameless stir.

Hope, who could take in so blessedly the little and close, could seize, with such a burst as this, the width and grandeur of its suggestion.

"O Richard!" she cried out, simply. "Just think of the *whole* of it! Going all round and round the world!"

She took the globe in her hands for an instant, mentally ; faintly feeling the grand idea of it, and receiving a far-away rapturous reflection of the Greatness that "taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

"Some of it is water," said Richard, in his homely, practical way, half quietly comical in intention.

"Yes," said Hope, just as literal, and despising nothing, but getting the further inspiration out of all. "And ships, and islands, and icebergs, and storms! And then countries again, and people!"

Why could not Richard, catching her large yet simple thought, that enlarged his own, so that even his clumsiness helped, not hindered it, have seen too how this girl's nature fitted his, and how sufficiently each to the other they rounded and satisfied and poised themselves in a perfect rest and peace together?

"You'd like to see the world, Hope!"

"Why, yes," she said, slowly, coming back, as it were, to the recollection that it was not all open, actual, instant vision. "But then," returning to her first insight and joy, "I do see it; my piece of it, you know; and that's all that anybody sees, at once. For the rest of it, you have to shut your eyes."

Still, as in the childish days, she could "shut her eyes and be there." I do not know that I can tell you of such a character as Hope Devine's without seeming to make it contradict itself. Such small content, and such large grasp; but they were there; and I think they are the clear reflection in a healthy human soul of That which weighs the dust of the earth in a balance, and spreads out the clouds as curtains; that peoples the water-drop with infinite life and walks with its archangels among the stars.

They came winding slowly down, the whole way, into Longmead; and Richard cut an ash-branch and fastened it at the wagon-side to shield Hope from the western sun, and asked her little questions about her comfort, and cared for her all along as he cared for everything that was in his hands; and Hope was so happy with his kindness, and with the beautiful day, and the life and the light and the music and the odors of it, and the thoughts that were things, that it never occurred to her to be troubled lest all this were not with Richard, too, in like manner, or beyond, what it was with her. Of course it was. Had he not brought her here on purpose?

They went round through the valleys, coming back; Pitch Hill was too much of an experiment with Swallow, and old Putterkoo was glad of the soft brown soil of the low land under her hoofs, after the cling and scramble among the rough stones and the hot gravel of the water-washed and sun-blazed road of the heights.

They skimmed along, with the swift fresh horse, and Putterkoo got her old mettle up, following, with no weight to carry; her white nose was easily over the wagon-back behind their shoulders. Under the cool willows beside the running water; in the air damp and sweet with the meadow moistures; with the light of the low sun touching and tinging all things

sidewise, and the lowing of cattle at their yard-bars, and the faint chitter of birds settling to their nests foretelling and forefeeling stillness and rest after the long summer-day of life and labor.

Hope thought of this ride years after, when things had happened that she dated from that night.

Into the wide, shady village street of Broadfields, and by the church green; down past the thinning dwellings, out between open grounds again; over the brook and through the edge of woods that lay across the road, and up again to the cheery house-yard and the door wide open to the sunset.

Anstiss Dolbeare in a white cambric gown, and a black silk mantle, sat beside Mrs. Hathaway on the oaken sill. From her fair hair gathered back in soft curves from her forehead, and around the head set with a peculiar grace upon the shoulders, down to the little foot that lay in a close, laced black morocco shoe upon the great granite doorstone, she was "a lady, every inch," as the people say. Sweet, still, refined; the eager nature burning only in the deep gray eyes that with their straight, dark line of brow and the defining of close lashes, also dark, made a singular combination with the soft shade of the brown hair.

She sat there with his mother, waiting, while Richard drove up. Hope felt him give a little start, seeing her at the first as they turned in from the road; and the throb that sprang out of his heart shot a winding vein into relief upon his temple, and there was a sudden glow out of his eyes. This is the way a strong man blushes; and it means, with all the added force of the man's nature, what a woman means when she flushes like a rose.

"I have come here for a rest," said Anstiss Dolbeare, standing up and reaching out her hand to him.

Richard Hathaway held his young horse with one hand by the bridle, and grasped hers with the other.

"We're right down glad to see you, Anstiss," was the young farmer's hearty, common speech.

What could he say, but after this, his fashion? He was *too much* a man to stand and blush there; he gave her the

quick, generous welcome that he always had for her ; he blundered, perhaps, into one of his most rustic expressions, just because he *would* so carefully have chosen the most beautiful words if he could, and while his brain sought them in a sudden tumult, his lips spoke something that came without a thought.

For the remainder, it kept silence ; but he heard his own heart beating in his ears.

There was no tingle in Anstiss Dolbeare's nerves, and the blood in her veins ran calm. So how should she catch the sound of the tempest that only came to him ? She heard the evening wind in the long elm-boughs, and she thought how still it was, and how she should find here the rest she had come for.

Hope sprang down, while Richard stood there with both hands busy.

" Why did you do that ? " he asked. " I was coming to help you."

" Oh, I can help myself," she answered, brightly ; and then she kissed Anstiss, and the two girls went in together.

CHAPTER XII.

BLANK VERSE ; AND CLOVER.

THE SILENT SIDE.

THE third perception and the voice must still read on, and tell a little of that which came next in the story of these lives that learned their own story in separate halves.

And whence, by the way, arrives that intuition that we are all conscious of while our fragmentary experience runs on, and we feel how little we are comprehended and how little we comprehend, and how small the time, and how poor the power to explain or to make clear,—of a something outside of us that puts together the pieces ; before which we justify ourselves, and finish word and deed that were broken off and prevented, take back the thing unmeant, and turn our whole selves toward a new light that shows us other than the world sees ? In the sense of which we find dim consolation, reassurance, hope ?

Side by side with this unknown apprehension, identifying himself, however humbly, with it, must the dealer with thought and life that might be or that may have been, put himself, and look, and listen. For that apprehension *is*, if in One only ; it is the relation God himself holds to every human soul. It is no light thing, then, but a solemn, to make one's self an insight and a voice, to see and to tell such things. As Hope Devine said in her fanciful childhood, who knows if “we can see anything that isn't there ?”

Hope and Anstiss slept together. Anstiss liked this when she stayed at the Farm ; it gave less trouble, and Hope was a part of the rest for which she came. She leaned upon her strength, instinctively ; she got the help, the comfort ; Hope,

giving it, and because she gave it heartily, felt the strain, as we have seen.

So they sat and talked, as girls do, on their bedside ; pulling the combs and pins out of their hair, and loosening their garments ; putting off the real undressing, the brushing and the pinning up ; when they began to do this they would begin to pin themselves up again into their individuality, also ; it is this unbending from the outer restraints that has much to do with the setting free of confidence.

"I can't tell what it is that Aunt Ildy wants," said Anstiss, hanging hairpins carefully one by one over the teeth of the shell comb she held horizontally, as if that were precisely the important thing in the world to be done, and the doing it was what puzzled her. "I think she is fond of me in her way, and would rather I should come to good than otherwise ; and yet she has thought it her duty for so many years to prevent me from having my want or my way in anything, that she can't keep her hands off now. She's proud to have me noticed ; she sets it all down to the Chisms ; she gets her best china out, and asks Allard Cope to stay to tea, and then she snubs him by way of taking me down, when he talks to me ; for fear I shall feel of consequenee, and it shouldn't be good for me ; and she tells me the next day that it all means nothing ; I needn't imagine it does ; he hasn't many other plaees about here to go to, and he's got a way of dropping in to talk to Uncle Royle. And then again, if he stays away, she hints something about off and on, and that nothing of that sort will answer with the Chisms, and she should think it was my business to understand what he was about, and my own mind, and to give him to know one thing or the other ; but then she never did suppose there was anything in it ; and it always sounds like 'How should there be ?' and a kind of taunt flung at me. I feel sometimes as if I could do anything to get out of such a life, and to show Aunt Ildy — Oh, I'm disgusted with it all ! I can't have a friend, nor a pleasantness ; and she tires me, — she *tires* me so, Hope ! "

There was a life-long weariness in Anstiss' voice ; and it dropped away, and she ended, as if so she gave all up, and

would let it fall away from her if she could, only that it still clung and dragged.

This was what tired Hope too.

But when she could not just see the beginning of a righting, she insisted upon the end that was to be.

"It will all come out, somehow. It has *got* to, you know. Things always do. They can't stay up in arms."

That was how she felt with an old carpet that lay in a heap, or a dress ripped up into pieces.

"If you care, yourself—" and here she stopped. Hope would by no means ask for the most intimate confidence of all.

"I don't know. Sometimes I think I don't care for anything. How can I tell how things might be? They have no business to be put into my head, beforehand. I'm ashamed; ashamed of being a woman, Hope Devine, and of having it thought that I am standing ready to be asked!"

She spoke impetuously, bitterly; wronged in her most sacred reserve, and driven to speak of what she would not have allowed herself to know, until another, who should have the right, should have come to her and bid her search, to give him answer.

"She spoils it all, whatever it might be. She would make it a cheat, even if it might have been the truth. I never wanted anybody to come and say 'You are going to have something given you,' even if they knew. I felt as if I had stolen and used and defaced it secretly, before the time, and as if my thanks would be hypocrisy, because that I had helped myself already. I have come here to get away, and to have a rest."

"Well, we'll rest you. That is the best thing. It's good to put a bother away over night. It all straightens out in the morning."

"I wish I belonged here. Or at the Copes. Anywhere that I could just *be*. Then I suppose I should live my life, whatever it was. But Aunt Ildy pokes at my roots so."

"People can't do, after all, anything except what they're set to. Make it out, I mean, unless it *is* meant. It's the transplanting that is to come next, maybe, for you, and then, you see, you'll flourish!"

Hope did not begin to say this until she had waited, in a half-troubled silence, for a minute or two. Then it came, and she brightened up, and gave it right out in her peculiar quick fashion ; quite sure of it, as if she had thought it over and over, long ago, and proved it by a full experience. She ended with a little jubilance ; and her face turned up at Anstiss, suddenly, with a light in it like an ecstasy of promise.

"Your face is like a sky-full of stars when you look so, Hope," said Anstiss.

Hope laughed. "That's poetry," said she.

"You made it, if it is," said Anstiss.

"Well, perhaps," Hope rejoined, merrily. "It don't take much to make poetry, after all. Why, everything is poetry!"

"Blank verse, a good deal of it," the other answered, falling back into her weary way.

"*Blank verse?*"

"Yes ; the verse without a rhyme ; long, heavy lines, just doled out in a measure, and every one beginning with a capital letter, just to make you catch your breath and think you're going to begin again."

"Why, that's like '*Paradise Lost*.' That's what the hero-stories are told in !"

"I'm afraid I'm not heroic," said Anstiss. "And I'd as lief my life wouldn't try to be an epic."

"Anstiss, dear, I'd read it, and make it grand, whatever it is ! I wouldn't skip, either. It all belongs ; and the coming out'll be *splendid* ! It always is you know."

"I don't know. Half the time they're all killed off at the end, aren't they ?"

"Well !" said Hope, in her very cheeriest tone.

"Well ?" repeated Anstiss, half angrily.

"Then you *do* begin again, don't you ? And then —" a sort of glorious earnestness came into her shining eyes,— "there's the hero-story — finished !"

That word of hers silenced them in a strange, unlooked-for way. They had touched on unexpected depths in their talk, begun in mere girl-fashion. Perhaps there came a thought of

the world's great Hero-story ; of Him who bore its utmost strain and agony, and said that of it,— It is finished !

They left off talking ; they put away their things and rolled up their hair. Anstiss went and looked out at the window, in a stillness, for some minutes ; Hope went straight and simply to the bedside, in her white night-dress, and knelt down. After that, they kissed each other, and got into bed, and the room was still.

Richard set the blinds open and drew the curtains wide in his east windows, before he went to sleep that night. He meant to be up in the early morning and off to Red Hill, to see if strawberries were ripe. So he got his three-mile walk, and his certainty ; finding the wild fruit lying in patient perfectness under its green leaves, on the far-off slope, doing its best with flashing crimson and rich perfume to advertise fairly that it was there ; and he brought back his news, and his sturdy appetite and sound cheeriness of temper, to his mother's plentiful breakfast, and the whole room and everything there was pleasanter from the minute he came in.

Here was not a man to hang about in a listless love, capable of but one weak thing ; he would be out on his farm presently, among his men and his oxen, and the smell of brown earth would be in his nostrils, and the sunlight penetrating him through and through, filling him with hearty vitality and grand manly power ; and whatever was in him would be expanding itself to the great round of a far, breezy horizon, and growing pure and clear under the searching light and sifting winds of the full, wide out-of-doors that he lived and wrought in. Something healthy, and strong, and worth having comes to a woman out of a heart like his, fed out of a nature and a life like that. A great brain and great book-feeding may be fine things ; they are ; but alone, away from other feeding, they are the poorer of the two. There is great meaning in that word — “heartiness.” The soul does not lie in a point ; it fills the whole human creature. A child, or a complete, healthful man or woman, will lay the hand on the breathing bosom to express its being and its feeling ; it is large and

palpitant there, and thence it thrills to the very finger-ends ; one with only a brain and a marrow will be aware but of a buzzing and a spinning in the skull. A bee in the bonnet, oftentimes, as likely as not.

It was a whole-hearted man who, as we know now, loved Anstiss Dolbeare.

For her, she got up this morning into a new, free, joyous existence. She had slept off the weariness of her latest vexations, and no real passion, or suffering, or life-questioning had as yet laid such vital hold of her that it could filter itself through her rest and her dreams, and tincture her new day.

She "began again" at Broadfields, always ; here it seemed, somehow, as if the sun itself had never risen before, but had just been made.

She came downstairs, singing ; she was full of a readiness to receive blessedly ; the old life was all behind the night, thrust and huddled away there, like a last year's garment which one may never want again. She was glad when Richard told them of the strawberry plenty ; they would go in the cool of the afternoon ; she felt as if she could pick a bushel.

Hope almost wondered at her. She herself never had such ups and downs ; she rested in a clear mid-atmosphere, poised on constant wings of a strong, blithe confidence. But she was glad for Anstiss that she could sing so.

Everything was satisfying ; everything was amusing ; she was ready to work and to plan pleasure ; to sing and to laugh.

All that happened touched some spring.

She came running to Hope in the back kitchen where she was hanging up her tin pans.

"There's *such* a woman in the sitting-room ! — Who is she, Hope ? — saying something to Mrs. Hathaway about a pasture and a fence. Her nose is six inches long, and her mouth is under her chin, and she talks with her elbows ! Puts the stops, I mean, and the italics, and the dashes, — so ! 'Layin' consider'ble *butter* down this June, Miss Hathaway ?'" and Anstiss jerked one elbow up towards Hope's face, — "that's the butter, and the interrogation point. 'You're a master

hand at dairy-work — allus *was!*!”” Poking sidewise at her with the other, and turning the end of the poke up in the air,— “that’s emphasis, and exclamation. And so she goes on. ‘Hired gals *precious* little account, hey?’— with a dash backward — I can’t do it — for the ‘*precious*,’ and a flourish round into her side again for the ‘hey!’ Why, who ever saw such a woman? Where does she come from?”

“From Red Hill way,” said Hope. “If we stop at her house to-night she’ll give us spruce beer that she makes herself, with all sorts of woods-flavors in it. She lives all alone there, except when she goes away sometimes to nurse sick people.”

“We’ll stop then. I should like the beer; but it can’t be equal to the elbows. I *must* go back. Can’t lose it, you see!” And Anstiss put her head down till she seemed to talk from under her chin, and leaned toward Hope, nodding and thrusting up her elbow at her again with a nudge and a sweep that expressed italics and admirations, and a dozen unspoken words in parenthesis. “It’s the greatest fun I ever saw.”

Hope thought how things must have chafed upon a nature that could be merry like this, before they could make it bitter, and hopeless, and sad, like last night; and she caught, too, a glimpse of the truth, that as yet it was purely outside chasing; the inmost vitality was safe, and might yet leap out and rejoice. So she spread her clean kitchen towels on the line in the sun, and began to sing too.

“If she can just be let alone,” she thought, “and have things come to her.”

They drove over to the foot of Red Hill in the open wagon, that afternoon; let down some pasture bars, and followed a cart-track over the short, dry, mossy turf, till, down a little bend between the roots of the great land-swell, they came into a shade of oaks and upon one of those little old farm-houses, black with unpainted age, having a one story upright in front and a long stretch of roof behind that a child could run up and down on, descending gently from the ridge-pole till it almost kissed the ground. Under a roof like that, one thought of a family of children as of chickens brooded under a wing.

Up to the very door-sill grew the short, green grass; and

lilac-bushes peeped round the corners and looked in at the windows. There was a hop-vine growing up one frame-post, and swinging its tender budding sprays of delicate green, and spreading its dark, rich leafage all along eaves and rafters and down against the old shingled sides like a tapestry.

"This is Mrs. Cryke's," said Hope, and Richard pulled up the horse at the doorway.

"I knew what you'd come for," sounded, almost before they saw; "wait *half* a minute;" and with this they perceived the elbow first, coming out at them like a great caret, while Mrs. Cryke poured foaming beer out of a full pitcher, as if she knew what had been left out of their pleasure so far, and was interlining it.

"I knew you couldn't get such beer nowhere else. *There*, drink *that*; and aint it *smackin'* good?"

Between pitcher and mug, and question marks, and marks of emphasis, both elbows were by this time working wonderfully, and good Mrs. Cryke was like the wooden man with the flails on the weather-vane over Richard Hathaway's barn.

"It's like pine woods and fern-pastures and swamp pinks and everything!" cried Anstiss, giving back the mug.

"It's got *everything* in it; everything that's *good*, and that *grows*, — *a'most!*" and the mug was full again, though how, goodness knows, for there was a nudge and a chuckle, and all the accents, and the whole play and tone of gratified expression between those elbows and the things the hands held, while she did it. A compliment fairly set the old lady flying.

"Well, here are some early marrow-fats that have got the best of *my* field in 'em," said Richard Hathaway, pulling a bag from under the seat, when they had all drunk of the mountain essence. And if there's anything they haven't got that they ought to have, you'll boil it into 'em, somehow." And he tossed it out upon the grass.

"Well, I'm beholden to ye, I'm *sure!* You never come empty-handed; it's give and *take*, to treat *you*; and the *take's* the biggest, by *all odds!!*"

The way she edged nearer and got among the wheels, and reached up and illustrated, and pointed, and put double ex-

clamations at the end, would have been dangerous to those active old bones of hers with any horse but Putterkoo in the shafts, or driver less watchful than Richard at the reins. But they got off safely, and left her vibrating and punctuating, and calling out after them with a great *Nota Bene* prefix to her supplementary suggestion:—

“ You stop as you come *back* along, mind! You’ll be thirsty *agin*, then! And there’s more where *that* came from!”

“ She lives there all alone,” said Richard, “ since her brother died; except when she’s nursing. And she gives away her beer, and people come miles for it in the hot weather; and she gets the best of the farming for her brewing; there’s something growing for her in everybody’s lot.”

“ All alone?” repeated Anstiss. “ What if she should be sick herself?”

“ Oh, she won’t. She may *die*, some time; I suppose she’ll have to; but she never’ll be *sick*. And if she should, she’s got a cat that knows enough to go for the doctor.”

How the breeze, and the sunshine, and the fragrance stirred together and poured down, and up and around them! How the moss crushed pleasantly under the wheels, and the yellow butterflies and the little brown ones that look as if they’d kept their winter gowns on, swarmed among the blossoming weeds, and how they smelted the strawberry patches afar off! How happy it was to be here with Richard and Hope, and old Putterkoo, and the peace and overflowing of the summer! How safe Anstiss felt, and how she rested, and took in many things that she could get nowhere else, as well as Mrs. Cryke’s beer!

What would she give for them? Out of her life what had she grown and brought with her of her best, to render back? Will he ask her, some time? Ask her, offering her more; all of this, and greater, for her whole life long? And will it be enough?

He will not be in a hurry; nobody will be in a hurry, here, “to put things in her head;” he will not search for words, or for a time, to speak; he has been silent a long while; by and by it will speak itself, perhaps, when he cannot help it; in

some common, unpolished, unstudied word it will come at last, but with a great heart-burst behind it that shall thrust it forth. And it will fall as at her feet. Will she take it up and care for it? In the great, full world of powers, and knowledges, and possible joys and satisfyings, to what is she secretly reaching? What is at the spring-head of her restlessness that she as yet but half knows, herself? Will she ever learn how it is that not always beyond the stars, or beneath the deeps, are the answers to life's dearest askings, but that the word and the gift are nigh, even in the mouth and the heart that are thirsting and beseeching?

They left the horse under shady oaks, and walked on into open pastures. Through a great patch of odorous sweet fern that gave out its spicy breath as they passed across it, and then upon a close turf again, overlaced everywhere with wild strawberry-vines, and its pattern pronounced with bright red clusters of ripe fruit, making a hill-side carpet of wonderful wild beauty.

"Fruit right off the vines," in a garden even, is an approach to perfection; but out of an abundance like this, free and exhaustless, it is more; we find out then, a part of the secret that we had not thought of before; it is not freshness, merely; it is the straight gift, the bounty for us; with no hand between ours and the First Giver's. This was in Richard Hathaway's heart, silently and half aware; making it beautiful to take into his hand and give into hers; the joy of Adam in Eden, that every man repeats as he may for the woman whom he loves. The joy of the woman is that there is this second hand.

So they give and take—lovers—flowers, always, by an instinct; it is the first offering; and for the country dwellers, there is this fruit-gathering; they only know how beautiful it is; it is a part of speech added for them only. We live and act in types, always; we are learning, so, the short-hand of heaven. Richard Hathaway heaped up sweet parables to-day for Anstiss Dolbeare. The letters spelled strange words; she had no key, as yet; the rich ripeness and the fragrance and

the beauty,—stillness, kindness, and peace,—were about her ; these were all ; she was at rest and happy with these.

They walked all the way back, through the pasture and woodland, to Mrs. Cryke's again ; Richard leading the horse. When they came there they found somebody else before the door. Mrs. Cryke and her elbows were pouring beer and making punctuation for Allard Cope, who sat on his beautiful black horse, so perfectly appointed ; handsome and gay, himself, in his summer riding-dress, with the flush of pleasant exercise upon his cheeks, and an expectation shining in his eyes.

Anstiss Dolbeare came up, in her blue and white gingham dress, with its small white linen collar and cuffs, her sunbonnet of the same, made with pretty drawings and frills, hanging back from her face like the calyx of a flower, and her white willow basket, full of red berries and green leaves in her hand.

He liked her just so, and she knew it ; she knew at once that he had come all this way to find her ; she would have supposed, a minute ago, if you had asked her, that he was in New York ; but she understood it instantly. The Copes had got home. Home, all the way from Europe, the mother and Laura, and Kitty ; and Grandon, who had been away for years. Allard and his father had gone to meet them on their arrival ; they had all come to South Side, and he had been over to Uncle Royle's already, and had traced her here.

Richard Hathaway knew it too ; he could read faster than he could speak, this man with a large, silent heart ; he was silent, perhaps, because he did read ; he was noble enough for that, too. Anstiss should read, and compare, and learn her own mind ; he could wait. He was noble enough not even to cloud or change, jealously, meeting this rival to whom he gave the road ; meeting him, in the midst of a little happiness that belonged quite to himself. No wonder that Anstiss interpreted none of his parables.

Allard Cope's straw hat was in his hand ; the buff leather bridle hung loose about his horse's neck, whose head was down among the sweet field grass, and whose long, wavy

mane touched its tops. His other hand took Anstiss Dolbeare's and gave it a glad pressure; then he swung himself down, put his arm through the bridle-loop and stood beside her.

He had always been the same; blithe, frank, debonnair, and honest, in his boy-loving up to his man-loving that it was going to be; from the day when he had pulled flowers for her in his mother's garden and told Augusta Hare what a pretty girl she was. What would Anstiss do between these two? One way or the other, it would seem that her life must brighten. Only they were such different ways! Yet her association had been alike with each, and as much with the sphere of one as of the other. It had been the single thread of melody played through the overture of her young years; taken up by two different instruments, at alternate times; but the one beautiful strain that made her glad when she caught it, out from among notes that elsewhere confused themselves in intricacies and dissonances that might be—she supposed they were—all right to an ear which could recognize the principle that grouped and ordered them, but that for her had been so tiresome,—such a pain. She could not feel, yet, the richness of the inharmonic chords.

Now, for a short measure, they were struck together, and in unison. For Richard Hathaway was just as kind, just as careful, just as simple-friendly, as before. She liked sitting by his side in the open wagon, with Hope Devine and the strawberry-baskets behind. She was quite herself, with these, away from Aunt Ildy's watching and comment. It was pleasanter, so, talking with Allard Cope, as he rode upon her other side; and if there were a secret pride and gladness in letting it be seen what else had come to her out of a world so rich and full to some,—if even she cared that his horse and his dress and his bearing were all so perfect and elegant; that such a stamp of gentlemanhood was upon him, and that with all this he came to her and found something congenial in her, even though she wore a gingham dress and a sun-bonnet; that he never minded that her gloves were off and her finger-tips rosy with strawberry-picking; if there were a little

triumph in the consciousness that she could be free and happy with him, she knew him so well, and was so sure of what he thought of her, — was it very bad and unnatural in a girl of nineteen, who had not begun to find out her own mind yet, and who had only these few things to be glad and proud of, — things that had been the same for years?

It was different when he stood talking with her afterward, alone, in the little front garden by the fence, among the roses ; holding his horse's bridle over the rails, putting off the good-by and the going. The shy, restless feeling came over her then, that she wished he would not stay so, and that the others had not left her. Hope had gone into the house, Richard had driven down to the barn ; and Allard Cope would not come in to tea, neither would he get on his horse and go home.

It was all very well up to a point like this ; she was not quite ready to be even shyly glad of moments like these. She was used to Allard Cope ; she was proud and glad of his liking ; she wished, sometimes, as she had said to Hope Devine, that she "belonged at the Copes ;" but she could add — "or here." She could not spare any of her friendships or pleasures ; but she would rather, since they were just what they were, that they should stay so, — for a while, at least. She dreaded anything coming that must be decisive ; she never talked this over with herself, or apprehended definitely ; she was only vaguely divided between these sudden shrinkings and her strong longings and leanings. Into Allard Cope's life — the life into which he might take somebody, some time — she looked, as into a paradise ; she was in love — with his mother, and the home atmosphere ; with himself, apart, she did not quite know ; she did not want to ask herself, or to be asked.

But all this belongs to Anstiss Dolbeare's own remembrances ; she can tell us best ; what we came to look at here was what she did not see and could not tell.

Richard Hathaway drove old Putterkoo down to the barn.

His day's pleasure had come and gone ; now there were the cattle to feed, and the oats to be measured for the horses,

and the bedding to be tossed down, and the mangers to fill. And then, when orders had been given and all looked to and done, and Putterkoo and Swallow had begun munching their grain, he went and stood by the fence and looked over into the three-acre clover-lot.

What did it tell him, this field of clustering trefoils and white and purple blossoms? Out of its bosom what comfort of sweetness, or promise of bestowal and joy, came up to him? Or what did he tell to it, leaning down with his arms along the rail and his farmer's straw hat pulled low upon his forehead?

He and the late bees had it to themselves; a swallow skimmed over, perhaps, for an instant, and the wind swept along the close pile of its dense leafage, stirring it in great masses, and shaking incense up into the air.

Time to mow to-morrow. That was what he was thinking, perhaps? Time to put the sharp seythe under the tender green and the rose-purple, and the pure, sweet whiteness that had been growing together all the early summer-tide, and crowding the whole field with beauty? There was no such clover-patch as his for miles around. Hardly a stone in the generous mellow earth beneath it. Full of heart and strength,—ready for any noble crop,—and given, this year, to luxury of green and a wealth of flowers. He should not sow it for next year in like manner. The plough must run under, and the harrow be fretted across, and the sober grain must go in.

The bees went home,—the swallows were fluttering about the barn-eaves; the wind slept; and the clover was still. Richard Hathaway was thinking very definitely now, with his head bent down upon his two hands joined together on the rail.

“She shall never come here to be sorry for it. I'll never ask her into that. I'll wait and see. She's *here*,—and she always will be; the whole place is full of her. I'd like it to be the only thing for her; is that mean, I wonder? Thinking it was, for so long, was what filled it up so to me. But if it isn't, I can stand aside. I've got stamina enough for that.”

He got up straight with this, and pulled his hat off, and lifted up his manly head. There were drops upon his brow, and the twilight air was soft and cool.

"I can't *talk* much, maybe. But, God helping, I can hold my tongue. And He knows, I guess, which it takes most of a man to do. I don't think that field was wasted, planting it so. It's been pleasant, and pretty, while it lasted, and it'll mix rich and sweet with the hay. We'll cut it to-morrow."

The time of the clover-bloom was over; the careless sweetness was at an end. The scythe was to be put in.

Richard set his hat upon his head again, and walked away. I do not believe he knew he had been reading himself another parable; nevertheless, he and the clover had had this to say to each other.

The dew came down and rested on the blossoms; they were baptized unto their death. For the man, he went home with the sweat of a heart-struggle upon him. That, also, was a chrism from Heaven.

"By the sweat of his brow, he shall eat bread."

And a man's bread is every word that proceedeth also out of the mouth of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT ANSTISS DOLBEARE REMEMBERS.

ALLARD COPE.

IT was in the winter after I was eighteen that Allard Cope began to come so much to Uncle Royle's. The family had always been kind to me; but, after all, their life and ours lay differently, and there were long intervals of time when I saw little or nothing of them.

Margaret Edgell was married. Hers was the first wedding I had ever seen. What new mystery of beauty, and of a strange, holy, separating blessedness was around her, and between her and us girls and all her old self and life, when she stood there in the church with her white veil falling from her head to her feet, enshrining her, and the minister said solemn words, and they two bowed their heads,—she and the tall, handsome man beside her,—and so took the solemnity upon themselves and received the blessing; when the organ sounded, and in the thrill and tremble of its music they moved softly down the aisle again, and he put her—his wife—in her white cloud of pure, enfolding draperies, into the carriage,—the only real coach in New Oxford except the private equipages at South Side,—and got in and sat down by her, and they drove away.

Only to the Edgells' home again, at first; there we saw them again for an hour or two longer; and then she went upstairs and took off all the cloud and the mystery and the fair types of her bridal consequence and insulation, and came down really among us, in her simple dark silk dress and her shawl and bonnet, to say good-by.

Still, there was the unseen sacredness; the grandeur and

the mystery of the new relation ; I looked upon her as from a sudden distance, though she kissed me, and her husband shook me cordially by the hand, and they said I must come some time and see them in Fairholm. There was something so strange and beautiful and exciting to me in it ; it seized and possessed me as the near touch of deep and living things does seize and affect the young imagination. And there was so little that came into the dull sameness of my life with anything like the thrill of this !

I went home and made a silly speech at the tea-table. Out of the fulness of feeling, and the awe at something far off and yet close in a strange sympathy of possibility. I felt the reality ; I spoke of the type.

" Oh, she did look so lovely, Aunt Ildy ! If ever I'm married, I'll be married in church, and have a long veil like hers ! "

" *Married !*" Aunt Ildy withered me. I was a child ; I had no business to think of such things ; I'd better wait till I was asked ; I wasn't worth asking ; I, married ! Preposterous ; forward ; unseemly ! All this tingled through me with her one word.

I colored all up, burningly. I felt as if I had said some shameful thing. Yet only a year ago it would have been just the same for Margaret Edgell ; and still, here it had come to pass. Why was it so improper up to the very minute ? I was only comforted to think that Uncle Royle had not come in.

What right had she to make me feel so mean, and so ashamed ? Afterward, it was the cause that I hardly dared to ask my own of life, or to know when I had got it ; it put me false ; it made me mistake great meanings. It took me a long while, and it cost me pain ; worse, — it pained nobler lives than mine, before the years and God's light set me straight and showed me clear.

I saw Margaret Holcombe a few months after ; only across the way ; she had come just for the day to her father's, and from my old window I looked up at hers, as in the childish times, and saw her there.

Her pretty silk dress filled up the low window-seat with its

shining folds and soft color. Her husband came in and laid a little basket of some small, ripe fruit upon her lap. Then she laughed, and made room for him, and they two sat there together, dipping their fingers among the stems, and dividing, and eating, like happy children.

It was the old story. Everything was beautiful and happy, even to a sublimity, over there. Here, I had the old inaccessible window-pane, and my chin stretched up to it, an' my mending-basket at my feet, just as it was years ago.

I was not without self-chidings for my discontents. I was not without glimpses of better things in life than havings or doings, even then. That is, I knew the things were, and that I ought to find them ; that God had given me my life, and the place and the way of it ; and that if I was truly good, I should be glad in him, and should not care. But I was not truly good, yet. I only wanted to be. And I wanted help, so ! I wanted some great, strong, kindly, loving soul to stand close beside me ; a motherly soul, or a fatherly, it might have been ; but I had missed that, and I was almost a woman now, and a blind asking for something yet possible stirred within me. I did not care particularly to sit and eat cherries in a pleasant window ; that only signified something more. I would like to share great sunrises, and solemn, beautiful sunsets ; deep starlights and grand thoughts ; questions and knowledges ; unspoken prayers, and griefs and joys ; to be always sure of a hand in mine, and a thought above mine. I was only asking for what God only gives because he has first made every human spirit to yearn for it.

The winter after I was eighteen, there was a change. I had new amusements, and I saw more of the little world about me.

I went to the great New Oxford ball, that they used to have once a year, and that everybody went to ; the families from South Side, and the tradesmen in the town : the large farmers, with their wives and daughters, from the country miles about, from Broadfields to Whiteacre. It was a grand old-times' institution, surviving recent differences, and transgressing the lines of daily custom.

Plain old women in snuff-colored silks and white neckerchiefs, with gold beads, like Mrs. Hathaway's, round their throats, represented the rural dignities, and sat against the walls, proper and very strange. Plainer women still, in woollen stuffs, and indescribable combs and collars, gathered modestly in far corners, and stretched and peered, with mild fidgets and solicitudes, above the crowd ; doing their duty anxiously of seeing all that was to be seen. Young people took the floor and danced together ; the simplest in some freshness of white muslin and bright ribbons, or bran-new suits a little stiff in the collars, and unaccustomed "pumps" and white stockings ; they who came down out of a grander every-day, quiet and graceful in their delicate best, as their mothers wore their satins and velvets ; for unity, not contrast or pride ; the yeomanry and shop-keepers would have been more wounded if the gentle-people had slighted them with demi-toilette while they were doing their utmost. It was a gay, good time ; everybody was happy ; I wish they had such balls now.

I had not been the year before ; Uncle Royle had been ill. Now he took us with him, he in all the precisionness and dignity of his black clothes and ruffled shirt ; Aunt Ildy in black silk and violet ribbons in her cap. He would have her go, notwithstanding her orthodoxy ; and as she scrupulously kept out of the card-room, and was under no temptation to dance, I suppose she felt secure that the devil would get no more of her than he was otherwise entitled to ; nevertheless, she did step round very much as if the floor burned under her feet ; but perhaps it was her tight black satin slippers. She had kept them for state occasions ever since I could remember, and she allowed herself great latitude and ease ordinarily, so that I think it became more difficult each year to wear them complacently.

Is this very ill-natured of me ? I do not mean it so. I respected Aunt Ildy ; I loved her, in spite of her hardness ; and I never felt more gently affectionate than when she countenanced me in this great pleasure that night.

But oh, I was happy ! Frivolously, excitedly, foolishly happy ; it almost seemed to me wickedly, brought up as I had been. Because I could not help being so glad that my blue

dress was just as pretty as it could be, and that the white roses set so gracefully against my soft, full hair, and on the bosom of the low corsage ; and that Uncle Royle had given me money and bade me choose for myself, and I had been able to have the little blue silk slippers which matched my dress. This was of a kind of striped silk gauze ; the stripes were like floating, glistening ribbons with their satiny texture and rippling fall ; and I had long ribbons like them at my shoulders. I had never been dressed like this before. Now something would happen ! Now the story would begin !

I think it did begin. The Copes were there ; afterward, Mrs. Cope and her daughters went out to Europe to join Grandon, and were gone four months ; but they were all there that night.

They spoke to everybody whom they met ; but they took me right in among them, and kept me with them. We separated for the dances ; Mrs. Cope would not allow her party to make up sets by themselves ; they mixed simply and graciously among the rest. And that set the tone for all New Oxford and South Side ; there was no sidling off, nor any airs, or jealousy ; everybody was happy, and went back into every-day the better for it. I think it was as good as many a church service.

Everybody did not waltz then ; and the polka and its kin were unknown. I waltzed ; I had learned at dancing-school with Allard and his sisters, and he asked me every time for his partner. I did not grow hot and tired, as some of the heavy girls did ; I was small and slight ; and Allard held me up so lightly. He told me I waltzed as if I could not help it ; and so I did.

I was whole-half happy that night, — if anybody would know what that means. Yet I think we all do. I was utterly happy with one side of me, — the gay child-side. And I owed it all to Allard Cope, nearly. With that gay, child-side of me, I loved him ; then, and once in a while, always. Why not quite and for all whiles ?

Hope Devine was there, too, with Richard Hathaway and his mother, and I think there never was a better time than she had that night.

When Hope was glad, her eyes, to which belonged a color

of their own at all times, had a strange clearness. They seemed as if they were all light. You could see into them as you can see into the sun,—into an infinite, glowing ether. So clear and lucent were they that they gave you that feeling of depth, as the sun does, since through its ineffable clearness you discern nothing but itself. It was like looking into a soul.

I did not see very much of Richard that evening. I was with the Copes so much, and he had his mother and Hope to care for. I mean, I did not *talk* with him very much; I saw him, somehow, nearly all the time. I felt as if he saw me. I think it was because he was always such a silent man that you felt so the watching and the thinking of his friendship. I knew he was glad that I was so happy. I liked to have him see me dance, and I should have missed him out of the hall if he had gone away, even in the very midst of a waltz.

Hope had never learned to dance. But that night she took it, as she took everything else,—by an inspiration. Not the quadrilles; people danced *steps* then, and she would not try these, though I saw Richard asking her. I danced two quadrilles with him myself; he came and asked me for them very early.

There was something of his goodness in his very dancing. He made no show or fuss about it; he just moved with the music in a simple, unpretending way, that was by no means awkward either; and he seemed to be always caring for his partner. It was a kind of a similitude. He let you go from him in the figures with a gentleness and a looking-after; and then he stood in his own place in a quietness that was like trust, till you came to him again; and then he claimed you and drew you back beside him in a way that was almost sheltering and tender; and when he went too, through the gay and intricate turns, it was like a joy and a protection. He was no ballroom man; he was a plain farmer, and danced perhaps only twice or thrice in a year; but there was the poetry of it in the way he did it, as I never found it out from anybody's else.

Hope got up at last, in the second country dance. She had

watched the first one down, as if she danced it in her heart, and then she "saw how it went," as she saw everything; and I only wish I could tell how she danced it. With Richard, of course; nobody else could have persuaded her. She was just like a spirit. She didn't think of her feet or her hands; they took care of themselves; it was like beautiful script,—her winding in and out, and up and down; tracing something swiftly and surely to make an end and a meaning out of it. There was not a halt, nor a break, nor a sharp, unskilful turn; every curve was a part and a hint of a perfect and graceful whole. If her movement had marked itself somehow as she went down the room, in the air, or along the floor, I wonder what it would have been. Something akin to the signs the swallows write against the dusk, or the flowers make in smaller print, nodding and swaying on their stalks, or the great inclusive hieroglyph the planets outline in heaven.

But then she was always like that; it was born in her; it was no wonder she could dance without learning. Lessons only teach by rote a segment of the harmony that describes itself continually in some few lives, and hers was one. If she swept a floor, or made up a bed, it was just the same.

She stood with that happy look in her eyes, her hand still in Richard's for an instant, at the foot, after they had finished. Something occurred to me at that moment. I wondered—and I have wondered since—if, or why—But I will remember only one thing at a time.

We ended with a "boulanger,"—a great dance in a circle, all round the room, all of us together. I was between Allard Cope and Richard in this. Allard was my partner, and Richard was beyond me, with Hope again. This and the country dance were the only two things she joined in.

There were basket figures, and grand right and left, and a Spanish dance figure, and all rounds, and promenades, and a "coquette." Hope fluttered a minute, when it came to her, in this, and then turned suddenly and gave her hands again to Richard. He took her hand quietly, and she looked so content, that I wondered again—why, and if. I came

next, and I had half a mind to turn Richard too. At any rate, I ran away from Allard Cope, and before I thought I had got among some people I did not know, and then I broke right through the set, and turned Allard's father, who stood looking on. There was a great laugh, and he laughed pleasantly, too, and with his old-school courtesy led me down the outside of the circle, and handed me back to his son. It drew looks upon me; I had not meant it; it had just happened; but there was, in the midst of the embarrassment, a half-proud consciousness of the kind distinction with which they treated me, and that people saw it; and something that I did not stop to think about made my heart beat suddenly.

After that we broke up into a galoppe, up and down the long room, and then came the thinning, and the stopping, and the scattering away.

Somebody ran against Hope in the galoppe. She herself was like a sunbeam, that glanced by or paused softly, always; she never would have run against anybody; but some one blundered against her, and almost threw her down. Richard's strong arm was round her waist instantly; I saw him catch her so, and hold her till he was sure she had her footing, and was not hurt. Hope's face was bright all over with a sudden blush. It was the mishap, the startle, perhaps; but her eyes were down, too. It was a different expression from any I was used to in her. She was always so up-looking, so straight and frank. If anything happened, she took it just as it was, simply, and without disturbance. And this was only for an instant, while she answered his question and moved gently away out of his hold. I do not think she knew it herself, for in an instant more it had quite passed, and her face had the old, dear, happy look.

They did not dance any more. That was the last. And Allard Cope took me up to the dressing-rooms then, to find Aunt Ildy, and I put up her cap in the box, and found her cloak and hood and moccasins for her, and put on my own wraps, and Uncle Royle came and looked in at the door, and we joined him, and went downstairs.

Somebody at the foot held out an arm for me as I came

down behind them. I took it, without looking up. I thought it was Allard Cope's. We went out from the passage that seemed dim after the lights above, and stood on the snow-path in the moonlight. Then I saw it was Richard Hathaway.

"You have had a good time to-night." He did not ask,—he said it; he had seen my good time; he had watched it.

"Oh, yes!" I answered, with all my heart.

"I am glad."

I wonder why this did not seem much to me. I know now how much it was; how generous it was; how those three words held more of a man in them than the finest sentence could.

He did not say another syllable, except "good-night," after he had seen me safe into the wagon sleigh. There was nothing a bit romantic about Richard Hathaway. But his good-night meant a real wish; I felt that, then. Somehow, the grasp of his hand stayed about mine long after we drove off and he left us. He did not move until we had driven off. It had been pleasure and excitement, upstairs, all the evening. Down here, at this last moment, came a reminder of a rest; of something waiting for me to return to; something sure, and for always.

I do not know what took Allard away, just as we left; I think he had meant to see me down; but it had happened so. Richard had not come in the way; but he had watched there at the stair-foot till I came down, alone; and then he had been ready.

He always did watch so; and I always found him ready. So that it came to be a habit in my life, if I had a pain, or a want, or a fear, that I thought of him; he would have been so sure to pity if he knew; and to help, if he could.

If there is a heart in the world like this, with a friendship in it for you, it is a divine thing, and life is rich. Yet you may be restless; and you may not know that it is enough. That knowledge grows only out of the *yesterdays*.

It was after this that Allard Cope came so much, all the winter and spring, to our house. His eldest sister, Mrs. Oxenaye, with her husband and two children, came to South Side to stay after the others went away. They went rather suddenly,

with a family of friends from New York, in one of the wonderful new ocean steamers ; and they were to come home with Grandon in the summer. Grandon had turned out such a noble man. He had followed his scientific studies abroad, and had become associated with some famous astronomers and mathematicians, and his name was connected with new and important calculations. He was coming home full of great plans and hopes for science in his own country.

Allard used to lend me books, and sometimes bring me flowers. It was pleasant, and there was nothing for me to do, at first, but to be pleased. It would have been absurd to be in a hurry to put on airs of caution with Allard Cope, as if his kindness meant anything new. I did not care to think about it yet, if it did.

How could I tell — anything — yet ?

Once in a while some sudden feeling would come over me, of one or the other contradictory nature. A thrill, sometimes, — with that great heart-beat, — at a possibility that I would not shape to myself; but that flashed a bright vision upon me of what might come real — to somebody. His home — and his mother — and his brother, so high and distinguished — and the whole family place and consequence. A life of refinement, and access to noble and beautiful things and companionships. I remembered those days shared with me out of this life of theirs ; I remembered that night with the stars.

I was pleased, in my lower self, to have Aunt Ildy see what she did see ; I was stung with a craving for her better thought of me. It was partly a mere instinct for truth and justice ; I knew there was more of me than she measured. What if — I got so far, sometimes ; but I never said the rest. Yet the question asked itself of me in the under-consciousness, and it went to make up the force that swayed me — this way.

And then, again, it would be the shrinking — the unreadiness ; at some special word or look it would come, and put a trouble in my heart. Was I right? What ought I to do? How could I tell?

This is the trouble with a woman ; there is no interval ; from

the minute it begins she must act as from a certainty ; people will judge her, looking back from the end ; and for her it is an impropriety to be looking forward. She must "know what she is about," while she is making up her mind. She must see and not see, feel and not feel ; her conscience interferes before her heart can interpret itself.

It was pleasant to be with Allard Cope ; I was proud of his caring for me ; I should have missed it if he had not. I was uneasy if he kept away longer than usual ; and yet, half the time, I was afraid of his coming and of what it meant.

In the midst of this I went out again to stay with the Hathaways.

And then Allard began to come over there.

CHAPTER XIV.

RED HILL.

It was pleasant June weather,—the last of the month,—when I went to the farm; just the season for drives and country plans.

The first time Allard came, he met us at Red Hill, on our way home from a strawberrying, the second day of my visit. And then nothing would do but he must get his sisters out there,—they had just come home, all of them together, from Europe,—and they must pick strawberries, and drink Mrs. Cryke's beer.

This was the beginning of a good deal of intercourse, to and fro, between South Side and the Farm.

What could I do to help that? People took summer drives from far and wide, to taste Mrs. Cryke's beer, and go round Red Hill in the sunset. Why should not the Copes come? It was their *all* coming, and our getting all together so, that made it impossible for me to prevent Allard. And he was over now, nearly every day, on one errand or another.

One night we had a regular party to the top of the hill. We had never been yet, in all this time, to get the jasper Richard had promised me years before. There had always been something else doing, when I was at the Farm, and going up Red Hill seemed to be the thing for a party. So at last it happened that though I had lived all my life within half-a-dozen miles of it, I climbed it for the first time now, with Hope and Richard, and the Copes and Augusta Hare, who had come to South Side again to make a visit. She had been abroad, too, with a party of friends, only last year. She travelled about a great deal. She spent most of her summers at some gathering place at springs or seashore,—the moun-

tains were not invented then,—or in visiting about; and her winters sometimes at Washington, sometimes in New York, and sometimes in H—. Her old engagement had come to nothing. It lasted just long enough to give her a great school-girl éclat and pre-eminence, and then something happened which made another interesting story and excitement for the young world that had time to tell and hear it over into a tradition that it knew by heart; something in which she played a very spirited and dramatic part, distinguishing herself as much in the dismissal of her lover as in the having one at all. But the really best of it was that it occurred in such early youth that she had had time to outgrow it in the memories of thoughtful and sensible people who had *not* learned it by heart at the time, and to whom it might not have appeared such an advantage.

So now she was at the Copes again.

Grandon Cope drove over with Augusta and Laura and a friend—Miss Rathbun—to whom they wished to show Red Hill. Kitty and Allard rode.

Hope and Richard and I just went over in the open wagon, as usual. Hope had tea, and all sorts of nice things in baskets, behind, ready for our gypsy supper. Of course we could not have done without Hope, any more than we could without the baskets.

Hope had a position at the Farm and in Broadfields such as is peculiar, I suppose, to a New England family and neighborhood. The Hathaways took her in, from the outset, as one of themselves; she grew up so, and nobody troubled themselves to go back of that, or to inquire how she had begun. The fact was accomplished. And besides, if they had troubled, she began, after all, just as they did, only up in New Hampshire. She came of farming people, too. She was just a bright, clever New England girl, and her place was anywhere where Providence might please to put her; and Providence, without the least irreverence, pleases to put New England men and women in a good many different places, sometimes, before it has done with them. We are not planted, like our oaks and pines, or even according to the catechism.

It was an instance of how we do shade and blend together here, and how one tone of uniting color runs through the varying tints, that circumstances could bring it about that the Copes and Hope Devine should meet here on Red Hill, taking tea together quite on equal terms for the time being. She was one with the Hathaways ; the Hathaways were important and respected people in this country neighborhood, and they were my friends and entertainers ; and I was admitted, from just an *étage* below, perhaps, but out of good family claim, and what they pleased to consider personal qualifications, to their intimacy and friendship. There is more fine line-drawing in cities, among people who truly, after all, are far more on a level ; but the real country still holds, or did then, its good, old, healthy backbone which is its strength ; and no one vertebral unlocks itself foolishly from its neighbor, up and down.

I think I never saw so handsome a man as Grandon Cope. He was beginning, even at twenty-eight, to grow a little stout ; but he was built upon a plan that would bear this amplifying. A little, small-featured man, who grows squat, and whose eyes shut up as his flesh increases, may well deprecate the gain. It turns him into just what he is, at some root of his nature. But a man who grows grand and full,— who seems as if his heart were big enough to require more body to hold it than other people's,— and whose intellect sits supreme on an ample brow and kindles within large-orbited, deep-set eyes,— whose limbs are firm and free, to stride forth into his life-action, to stretch out a broad-handed grasp, and to gather into strong, sheltering embrace that which he would hold next the great, generous heart,— this man is one of God's glorious creatures, and such a man was Grandon Cope. There were a few shining threads among the close, brown locks upon his temples, thus early. They only glistened at the ends, like a slight powdering of silver grains, and they helped, artistically, as a point of color, to fill out the lustre of the face whose deeply brilliant eyes and perfect teeth made its smile, or its least movement in speech, a resplendence.

I had as much idea of Grandon Cope taking any special notice of me as I had of Red Hill bowing its crest before my as-

cending feet. I talked and walked with Allard and Hope. Richard helped the young ladies up the rough ascent, and they seemed well pleased with his quiet, manly efficiency and his becoming bearing. They made him talk, as much as he ever did ; and to make Richard Hathaway talk was to draw forth something real and significant, in so far as it went. Mr. Grandon Cope had Miss Rathbun and Augusta to his share, naturally, as the elders of the party. Walking behind these, I looked and listened.

We kept this order nearly all the way up the hill. Richard carried a large basket ; Hope had a small, light one, which having cream and vanity cakes in it, she would by no means trust to other hands. Mr. Cope and Allard were each laden, also, with some contribution from South Side. I had the basket of sponge cake. One of the farm boys who had ridden over on Swallow, trudged in the rear, with frequent halts, bearing the few articles of table furniture that were needed, with the spirit-lamp and the water-boiler, and some spoons.

"If the fun of the world isn't the work, after all, why picnics ?" said Grandon Cope, looking back and laughing.

"Only, perhaps," said I, as I met his look, "we're so used to our pack that we don't know how to go without it."

It took very little to amuse Grandon Cope. I have noticed this in other men of great thought and deep study. The laugh was always perdu in his eyes and on his lips. I believe it is the greatest fools who go gravest through the world. If the heart and brain hold anything much, it overflows easily. He laughed again at my answer, and then the quietness came back, as he said, still in the same tone, however : —

"I wonder if we shall feel so about our troubles, sometime?"

It set me thinking. If all my troubles rolled away from me suddenly, what should I be,—the rest of me? Very like, perhaps, to something from which the law of gravitation had withdrawn itself, it occurred to me, all at once, to imagine.

I did not know that Mr. Cope observed me further, or saw that I was still thinking. It startled me when I heard him say, unexpectedly, "Well?" And I looked up to see that he

was speaking to me. At the same time, Hope had fallen back a little, and he dropped into her place by my side. Allard had to go on then, with the others. The Copes were always polite.

I knew what he meant. I like monosyllables. I like brief, snatchy talk. I can't bear a person who begins like a lawyer's deed, upon every topic, with a "Know all men by these presents," and goes on with whereases and aforesaid.

It was like a little whet to a knife, that "Well?" — it sharpened and brightened me up.

"Half-a-dozen things," I said, answering what I knew he meant to ask. "The old woman that had her skirts cut off,—the draggle and rags, I suppose,—and wondered 'if it be I.' Pains and pearls,—bad for the oyster, and yet the best of him; and an apple that I've sometimes tried to get all the knurls out of before I ate it, and then found there wasn't anything left but a few sposhy crumbs."

"Have you found all that out?"

"No. It's only a translation, yet. I can read it, that's all. I suppose I shall go on digging out the knurls and spoiling the apple."

Why is it that a certain part of ourselves comes readily and inevitably forth of us in speech to certain persons? I should never have spoken so to Allard, or even to Richard Hathaway. Perhaps to Hope Devine I might say some such things; but just imagine me talking like that to Miss Chism! And here was a man, a stranger, far above me every way, of whom I was afraid when I stopped to think about it, and something in him laid hold of my secret, inmost feeling and drew it to the light. Out there, it began to look impertinent. I colored and stopped.

"It's a good thing to adopt a trouble," said Grandon Cope.

"*Borrow!*"

"No. Grow round it, as the roots grow round the stones. Or as the prettiest things in pleasure-grounds come of the disfigurements that could not be got rid of, old stumps made

into pedestals for flowers and vines, and rocks heaped all over with lovely plants that flourish nowhere else."

"That's more translating. And the same is in homelier things. I think I *do* like a dress better after I have turned and darned it, or spilled something on it and got the spot out."

"Ladies used to wear patches for beauty-spots."

"But then — the patches weren't blisters!" A long breath came in between the two parts of my sentence.

Mr. Cope looked at me earnestly. He laughed, at the same time; but the look came through the laugh, from very kind and understanding eyes. It was as if he saw, over my shoulder, all at once, what book it was out of which I was translating. I wonder it did not seem more strange to him. He could not have had a copy of his own, anywhere, that he had ever learned a lesson from. I thought so then; later, I have almost come to the belief that it is the primer, and that the whole school learns it.

"To go back to the beginning of our interpretations," he said. "Did you know it is sometimes easier to carry both hands full than one?"

"Two pails of water, with a hoop round them, — yes; but then I couldn't carry *one* pail — far."

"Only a little basket, with some cake in it? Well, we shall be glad of the cake, when we get to the top. What do you think is in my basket?"

"Something a great deal better than mine. I am sure of that."

"It is heavier. See!"

"Yes. But you are bigger and stronger."

"Shall I — show you?" He finished the sentence so, after a break. I think he was going to say something different at first, but remembered that we were talking in metaphors. I think he was going to ask if he should help me carry mine; and he was not a man to make a foolishness like that. His very fancies were true, and fitted themselves to no absurdities. I did not think of all this then, though.

He lifted the lid a little, and showed me, lying in layers

among soft, snow-white cotton, great rosy peaches from his father's hot-houses.

"We don't know each other's burdens, — the weight or the beauty of them ; and we don't often know what is *inside* our own. We shall find that out when we get to the top."

"What a jumble we have been talking !" he began again, after a minute in which I had found nothing more to say.

"And yet it has been all one thing," I answered. "I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Cope."

"For letting you see the peaches?"

"Yes."

"We are almost up, now. Feel the breeze. That's the air that never quite gets down into the valleys, but only sweeps over the crests."

Mr. Cope took off his straw hat, and stood still a moment.

We had come out into the "thinning ;" where there were open spaces of crisp turf, and rocky knolls bare to the winds and the sunlight. The pine-trees stood here and there in groups. We had spread ourselves as we ascended into this out of the closer path. Mr. Cope and I had got away to the right of the others, and had had our talk mostly to ourselves.

"O Mr. Cope ! Here is the jasper!"

I picked up a piece at my feet. A great rock cropped out of the sod, with the rich, dull red upon it that could be fretted to such a lustre.

The old thought came back to me again.

"Perhaps *you* can tell me, now," I said.

"Perhaps. What?"

"About the meanings. Jasper, and sapphire, and chalcedony; emerald, sardonyx, sardius, and chrysolite; beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, and amethyst. I want to know them all, — the twelve stones : the wall of the New Jerusalem."

He stood with his bared head lifted up in the fresh breeze, against the clear sky. Something noble came into his face, listening to what I said. It was the answer, dawning.

"We want to know them all, — yes ; if we can be worthy.

But it is hard reading, some of it. We should skip some of the lines if we had our way. We should build a low, poor wall, of but one stone perhaps. See! This crimson that lies at the beginning,—it is the color of passion, suffering. Out of the crimson we climb into the blue,—that is truth and calm. Beyond, is the white, glistening chalcedony, for purity; and next, flashes out the green,—the hope of glory. Then they mingle and alternate,—the tenderness, and the pain, and the purifying; it is the veined sardonyx stands for that,—the life-story.

“The blood-red sard is the sixth stone,—the whole triumphant love that contains and overwhelms all passion; the blessedness intense with its included anguish. It is the middle band; the supreme and central type; crowning the human, underlying the heavenly. Then the tints grow clear and spiritual; chrysolite, golden-green, touched with a glory manifest; the blending of a rarer and serener blue,—the wonderful, sea-pure beryl. Then, the sun-filled rapture of the topaz; and chrysoprase, where flame and azure find each other,—the joy of the Lord, and the peace that passeth understanding. In the end, the jacinth purple and pure amethyst, into which the rainbow refines itself at last, hinting at the far distance of ineffable things.—For it is the story of the rainbow, too.”

“I knew it was!”

“It was a sublime *sentence* that was written on the cloud to stand forever. Colors have always been types. How strange it is, that living amidst signs and emblems,—living *by* them as we do, since the lifting of an eyelid, the quiver of a muscle, the sweep of an arm, the gesture of a finger, speak more meanings from the commonest man to man, than books-full of words,—we should trouble and dispute about speeches and writings, as if nothing had been given to the world except by these. We look a man *in the face* to understand him. Why not look in God’s face?”

That was grand. Because it was spoken so simply, looking right in my face, as he had said all the rest; not with the changed tone of a half-ashamed solemnity, such as the name

of God comes in with, if it come at all, to most men's talk. The beauty of his thought led directly up to this. Of the truth and the power of it nothing else could come, and nothing less.

"‘Like a jasper and a sardine stone.’ Do you remember where that comes in again?”

I knew the Revelation almost by heart.

“Oh, yes,” I answered. “‘He that sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne in sight like unto an emerald.’ It is the same thing, right over.”

“Yes, and the meaning proved. Out of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. How full the words are of the depth and glow that require such a rich similitude! The wall of stones was like an alphabet; it gave you the key to the whole radiant language. Without such key to its types, no wonder people puzzle over the Apocalypse. It is a strange denoting of the aspect of the Son of man, taken at the mere letter; ‘like unto a jasper and a sardine stone;’ but read them as the fervent attesting colors of Suffering and Love, and how full the Face and Presence are, so briefly likened! Did you ever think how much color says to us? How it puts in mind of things *unspeakable*? The depth of the sky,—how should we know it without the blue? The rest and the shadow of the earth and the great trees,—what would they be without the green? So that a mere ribbon comes to give a feeling; of freshness, or brightness, or coolness, or warmth, or softness. To me, words have colors. Standing for things and for meanings, they take the shades of them. People’s names have tints, by which I like or dislike them.”

“That seems strange,” I said. “To me, words and names have shapes and attitudes, rather. Think of ‘reach,’ for instance. You can feel the stretch of it. And ‘grasp,’ and ‘leap,’ and ‘crouch,’ and ‘grovel,’ and ‘lift.’ You can see the posture of them all.”

“Those are words of attitudes. But you are right, as well as I. ‘Tender,’ and ‘true,’ ‘strong,’ ‘brave,’ ‘great,’ ‘tiny;’ you can see the delicate touch, the unswerving line, the swell

and tension of the muscle, the bare, free, unflinching brow, the expansiveness and the holding, the mite that you look closely or downward to perceive. I can read them so, but they come to me most easily in shades. It is just what I said before. Words are only the arbitrary signs. We talk and think in living types. If language does not suggest these, it has no meaning. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ How can people look and not read? And in the crowding and fulness of it all, ask for ‘a sign’?”

This was so real,—so different from the usual set-apart tone of anything that approaches topics of faith,—that it filled me full of a new and wonderful warmth and glow of perception and gladness. I wondered, too, at Grandon Cope; for I had heard, even then, other things of men of learning, and of the Anti-Christ of Science.

I spoke something of this to him.

“I thought,” I said, “that scientific men came, often, to doubt — could not reconcile — these things?”

“How do you look at a picture?”

I did not quite consciously comprehend; but I had an intuition, by which I answered to his meaning.

“*Into* it,” I said.

“Exactly. Some people measure the lines, and fit a theorem to the proportions, and analyze the pigments and the mixtures. That is one finding out,—the mechanical *how* of it, perhaps; the *thing itself* is taken differently.”

We came, now, upon the great, round top of Red Hill. The sun, far down the west, sent horizontal shafts of light upon us, and below, the woods and fields lay in cool masses of shadow. The quick breeze found us out here, too, searchingly; and we were glad of the shawls we had brought with us. The dry, warm, lichen-cushioned rocks gave us pleasant seats, and the turf itself was our table. We had hot tea in ten minutes, out of the spirit-boiler. We drank this, and ate fruit and cake, and hardly knew which we tasted, or where the cheer and strength came in from,—these, or that which we took in at our eyes; all the hill-sides, and meadows, and

grain-fields, and river-bends, and gleams of ponds, and glooms of woods, and grouped villages, and scattered farm buildings ; the wide, round, perfect sphere of the blue sky, with its clouds turning golden and bronze in the light and shadow of the coming sunset, and soon to be gorgeous with crimsons and purples and saffrons, and intenser flecks of glory that would not be color, but pure flame ; the greens that turned black, and indigo, and blue, and faintest violet, with the lines of farther distances, hill lapping over hill, and forest stretching behind forest, till — there was the word of the rainbow again, with its near and far, its first and last.

“Are you comfortable, Anstiss?” Richard came and asked of me. He had been fetching water from the little spring on the other side the brow ; opening baskets, helping Hope, spreading shawls ; making everybody comfortable. Now he came and sat down beside me.

“Isn’t it beautiful?”

All my thought of the last half hour was in my question, to my own feeling ; but how should it have been to his? What was there in my commonplace word, to convey it? Why should I have been disturbed and disappointed when he only said, in answer : —

“Yes ; there’s no better outlook in forty miles. It’s a pleasant country ; and a pretty pleasant world, it seems to me sometimes, Anstiss.”

How did I know how much might be behind that? What right had I to judge his thought as less than mine? He had got his pleasant, peaceful word out of it all, as straight from God as any. In his eyes there was a rest and a gentleness that were reflections of that which spoke about us, in the air, the light, the color, and the stillness. There was something large and strong, too ; the expanding of some soul-horizon ; the waiting for some hour of night and loss that might come between him and the day. I look back, and see it, now. “Diversities of gifts ; but the same Spirit ;” why could I not read it then?

“I have found out about the jasper, Richard.”

I would have brought him my new treasure of meaning and feeling, as a child brings home a gift to show.

I had asked him the question years before; of course he had forgotten it.

"Jasper? oh, yes; there's plenty of it, the common red kind. But sometimes you can find a piece of ribbon jasper, with the white streaks in it. Have you seen that?"

"Oh, there it is again; that's the *meaning* of it, Richard. That's the chalcedony; that comes afterward; that is rare with the red. Oh, how beautiful it all is!"

He looked at me with only a sympathy for the fact of my pleasure.

I was restless that he should know. I forgot how it had come, by no forcing, but a gentle, natural following, and a gradual help and answering, to me. I forgot that I had not begun,—that I could not begin, with another, perhaps, at the very beginning which had told itself to me. I forgot that he was reading, all the while, another leaf, it might be, of the self-same book.

"I mean about the wall in Revelation. The types of the stones, and the way things come after each other. Suffering and love, and truth, and purity; the red jasper, and the blue sapphire, and the white chaledony; then the brightness of the emerald, and the mixed sardonyx, and the deep-red sard; and purer green, and clearer blue,— gladness, and fulfilment, and rest; and topaz, and chrysoprase,— the joy unspeakable and the perfect peace; and jacinth, and amethyst, the colors of the heavenly *beyond*, —like those far-off hills."

He did not know the wall by heart, as I did, stone by stone, and the colors of them; the unity and the coherence of the interpretation could not appear to him as it did to me, in the moment of my rapid utterance of what had become so familiar. He sat and looked quietly at the far purple hills, and let me be, as it were, with my fancies and my enthusiasm.

"Don't you see, Richard?" I asked, impatiently.

"I don't know. There seems to be a good deal of it," he said, in his pleasant, half-jocose fashion. "I suppose you might make out almost anything, that way."

" You couldn't make things that would *hold together*, unless they were true. Any more than you could tell that two and two made four, if once in a while they happened to make five. Or if apples did, and peaches didn't."

" Figures always turn out according to rule. They can't make mistakes."

" They're only the signs of things that fit together. And when you've got the things, you don't stop for the figures. You can see that two apples are just as many again as one without doing the sum. It's the *seeing* that's the beginning of it, and of everything. When a good many people have seen the same thing it becomes a piece of knowledge, to be handed about. When a good many people have had the same thought, or the same feeling, and they come of the same causes, or hang together and explain each other, then they make words for them, and the words hang together; and there's something reasonable and established; something that nobody stops to dispute about. But you've got to believe your own or somebody else's *eyes* to begin with; inside or outside eyes, whichever it may be. How do you know what *blue* is, at all?"

" I don't," said Richard, simply.

" But it gives you a kind of a feeling. It's one thing, and red's another. One seems soft, and the other bright. And soft and bright are feelings, too, that everybody's had till they've grown into words. Richard, everything is a word. And the meaning is the whole of it. All creation is one great talk, I think."

Richard Hathaway laughed out. It jarred with me; I meant something grand and solemn. I did not want to assume grandeur and solemnity; I hated to seem to try to be eloquent. I put it into common words; but I meant what I think the first chapter of John's Gospel means. And Richard thought it was only funny.

I got up and left him sitting there, and went over and joined Hope, to help her put up the cups and plates.

Twenty minutes after, when the last mellowness of the sunset was gliding away through the heavens and over the hill-

sides, and we began to speak of going home, I saw him sitting there still, by himself, with his head against the palm of his hand.

I wondered if I had hurt him. I could not bear to do that, he was so kind and true. I went over to him again, and spoke.

"Come, Richard; we're going. What are *you* making out now? It's your turn, you see."

He took me by surprise, looking up at me in the way he did. His face was full; if his lips had spoken it all, I felt as if I might have trembled before it. But all he said was:—

"You mustn't think, Anstiss, that I don't like your thoughts. Or to have you tell them to me. I was only pleased at your little ways of saying things."

It was not much; but it was so sorry and patient. As if he had been wholly wrong, and I had not been rude and un-friendly. As if his laugh had been anything but the honest happiness he always felt with me and in my ways from the time I was a little child until now. He spoke the word "pleased" as the New England country-folk do speak it, meaning amused,—touched gently with a sense of droll aptness. It is another remnant of the old decorums that kept all things chastely under. I have heard a plain, quiet woman, subdued by long Puritanic proprieties, say of an occurrence utterly and convulsively funny,—"I was *so pleased*. I had to smile."

There is something quaint and gentle in the word so used; it just expressed Richard's meaning; he was kindly, even tenderly amused; at my way, not at the thought I had and tried to speak. But when I had wanted him to seize the *thought* and help me on with it, ah, there we were back again, at the very thing that had offended me.

"I didn't mind the laughing, Richard, if you had only cared!"

"Perhaps I do care; but I can't tell much of my carings, Anstiss."

Something made his lips shut tightly after he said this, as if otherwise they might have quivered.

How different he was from Grandon Cope; how little he satisfied me in one part of my nature; how thoroughly he calmed and rested me in another!

"Never mind, Richie," I said. "We won't talk; we'll just have a good time."

But for all that, when we got into twos and threes again, going down the hill, Allard was with me. I think Mr. Grandon Cope made a step or two toward me once, as if he had something to say, and would have joined me; but it seemed as if he knew it would interrupt Allard, for he glanced at him and turned away. There was a kind, brotherly look in his eyes as he did so.

I was reading very fast, then. A great deal came to me that I did not spell out as it came, but took rather as we take in the sense of whole printed pages sometimes, hardly conscious of the word-points that we catch, but only of a general complexion. Everything was making me more and more at home with the Copes, as a family; making me more and more to feel how cordially they all received and liked me, and how little I could spare that intercourse and liking out of my life.

"Grandon is delighted with you, Anstiss," said Allard, as we walked forward together. And then he went on to tell me what a splendid fellow Grandon was, and what a difference his coming back had made at home. "We are a whole family, now, I can assure you. We never seem to be quite that when Gran' is away. Everybody goes to him with their questions and their plans. He puts us all at our best, too, you see. He brings out the colors, like a strong light. Yes," he repeated, pleased with the simile he had hit upon,— "that is precisely it. Everything comes out; and everything shows up for what it is, when he is present. He looks at a thing, and you see it, before he speaks, just as he sees it, if you hadn't noticed it was there before.—I am so glad he likes you; but I knew he would."

Allard was just as frank as a boy; he spoke his thought without measuring beforehand what it might reveal. There was a great deal evident in these words of his. I came close

enough, then, to be counted among the things of home to be judged of in this strong light of Grandon's presence, and it was a great deal to Allard how I might be judged; as if he, in some way, were responsible for me. It almost seemed as if some significant matter were already sanctioned and settled. Certainly it appeared that this was all that Grandon Cope could possibly have to do with it or me. As Allard's friend—as the friend and intimate of all—he approved, and found reason in me; and for this Allard was glad.

I was glad also, and proud; at that moment, to be among them so, and to look up with them, claiming in part, as they did, his help and companionship, was a great and a sufficient thing. I never felt more drawn toward Allard, more moved to stretch forth my hands to him and have them filled, to rejoice in the good of his life and take it into mine, than now. I thought of the home, of Laura and Kitty, of brotherhood and sisterhood like theirs. They had among them all I craved; I was almost ready to seize it as it came to me; I could never dream of coming closer to it than this. The heart that has gone hungering and thirsting for many things can hardly compare possible satisfyings when first it catches a near flavor of great joy.

I was very glad that Grandon Cope was pleased with me. Everything seemed bright and happy. I was willing that Allard should quite keep me to himself, and talk on, gayly and affectionately. Life looked pleasant before me that evening; I hardly feared the turnings of the way. It would all come out right; there would be guide-boards to follow.

The great midsummer moon poured her light down through the Red Hill woods; it sifted and shimmered through the pine branches, and baptized the old gray rocks with beauty. Our way was at once fair and dim; we walked in a seclusion and a glory. We heard the sweet night-sounds of the forest; the winds and the wakeful insects, and the trickle of tireless water; the stir and spring of growing interlacing things. I was held and touched with the exquisite pervading charm; Allard Cope was at my side, and Grandon walked behind, looking down upon us two together, kindly and well-pleased.

In all this I hardly knew where my happiness most lay ; but I was happy. I began to think that I could always be content.

THE SILENT SIDE.

She talked of Suffering and of Love, of the stones in the wall of the New Jerusalem ; she could not see the colors a human soul was taking at her very side. How the Crimson touched it even then ; how it was entering, perhaps, the baptism of its agony.

They preach of a great Vicarious Anguish, suffered *for* the world. Do they not know, rather, that it was suffered *in* and *with* it ; that it was, instead, an Infinite Participance and Sympathy ; that the anguish was in the world, and the Love came down, and tasted, and identified itself with it, making of the ultimate of pain a sublime, mysterious Rapture ? That it is far more to feel the upholding touch of One who goes down into the deep waters before us, and to receive, so, some little drops that we can bear of the great Chrism, than to stand apart, safe on the sunny bank, while He passeth the flood for us, bridging it safely for our uncleansed feet forever ? That — not this — was the Pity and the Sacrifice ; that is the Help and the Salvation ; the Love and the Pain enfold us together ; that is what the jasper and the crimson mean ; the first refraction where the Divine Light falls into our denser medium of being ; the foundation-stone of the heavenly building. The beginning of the At-one-ment ; till, through the thinning angles and the tenderer, peacefuller tints, our life passes the whole prism of its mysterious experience, and beyond the far-off violet, at last, it rarefies to receive and to transmit the full white light of God.

What did she know of this, but some faint perception of the beauty ? She talked of things in which he had not learned ; she handled signs that were strange to him ; all the while, he was beginning upon the things themselves they stood for.

“ A talk, all of it, — is it ? ” Richard Hathaway said to him.

self, sitting there with his head upon his hand, and the sun going down before him ; and all the air turning red. "I think it is more a doing and a bearing.—What is it the Bible tells about 'patterns of things'? They are patterns of things, maybe, and meanings, as she says ; but a pattern is a thing to *do* by. It isn't just a picture to look at. Every man has got his own wall to build. After some pattern that we don't know, as likely as not. We're working most according to some rule that's above our work, perhaps, when we think most we're having our own way, or taking our chance. I don't expect to understand the whole project of it ; I can't make out an architect's plan and specifications, and I don't know as I'm meant to. I'm only a journeyman builder, and the stock's furnished. I must take it up as it comes. I know very well what stone's laid upon me now to carry."

Beyond that, the unspoken wording ceased ; there was no shape of thinking for what came next. The weight was upon him, that was all ; and there was the soul-strain as of one who taketh up his cross. Yet the burden was transfused all through with the flush of his great courage. That turns the dead rock into the living preciousness, fit for its setting in the high and everlasting places.

His thought had been as true and grand as hers. What if he had only uttered it as it came, if indeed it came in time? Grand thoughts do not always arrive for the parade and the review ; it is for the fight that they reserve themselves in natures like his. You see he was not busy with his thinking, but his living.

How he should bear and wait. How he should let her prove, and try, and receive, and choose. How he should stand always ready and never in the way.

If all this fell short, after all, of filling, and satisfying, and shaping her life ; if there remained to her, by and by, only a friendship, tantalizing, perhaps, in the different sphere it reached from to her, and contrasted with her own ; if the rest, and the home, and the certainty were wanting still,—then, perhaps, her womanhood might turn to him and to his fireside as her childhood had done. Then, perhaps, heart and hearth,

waiting so long with a great faithfulness, might take her blessedly to their glow and peace.

Out in the west the crimson was softening. The beautiful liquid gold was beginning to overflow in the far deeps, and to touch the little flecks of clouds till they burned like stars.

Something transfigured itself like that in Richard Hathaway's thought. A far-off rapture lit and shone along the horizon.

"God help me!" The cry stirred in his soul that did not pass his lips. The cry of a great hope and a tender longing; his pain had been silent.

Then had come the hand upon his shoulder, and the voice in his ear: —

"Come, Richard!"

And then he had looked up with his face that was full.

How could she guess at what the man was, from the few, plain, kindly words he uttered? How could she translate that fulness and that shining, or make them seem in keeping with his homely phrase? How could the gentle, constrained excuse convey the regret, generous and tender even to a remorse, that moved him, thinking how he had disappointed her and sent her away? Or the love, held back and panting, that if it had spoken itself out might, as she divined, have made her tremble?

How should she know what pain came back to him when she said: —

"Never mind, Richie; we *won't* talk, — we'll just have a good time."

That was all he was good for! She would keep her thoughts for people who could answer them. When she was in a childish mood she would come to him to have a good time! That was what her word sounded like to him.

The glitter had gone from the cloud-specks. They were turning cold and gray. The gold had poured itself all out and had been wasted. The moon was burnishing her disk brighter and brighter overhead, as the sun-rays died. They would have her light to go home with, and their day would be done.

Hope came to Richard; she had nobody else to walk with,

after Allard Cope and Anstiss moved away. And so the party broke itself into its twos and threes, and the moonlit woods said this to one and that to another as they went down.

CHAPTER XV.

OUTSIDE.

I SAT in the east doorway, looking out into the front yard. The north-west wind, coming down from the mountains, cool over the house-top, met the morning sunshine slanting down through green boughs, and made it pleasant. The grass was all over leaf-shadows and flecks of bright, shifting light.

A quick little flash of life — the tiniest of striped squirrels — played in and out the old stone wall between the door-yard and the Long Orchard. The cat was chasing the shadows ; springing after them as they shifted, crouching herself in the cool grass, leaping now and then up a tree-trunk. I sat watching them.

Just made and meant for them — all of it ? Doubtless it seemed to them so. Men build stone walls, and squirrels come and live in them. What do they care for other uses ? From the squirrel-point there are none.

The great trees have grown these fifty years, or a hundred ; and the sun shines down through the far heaven, and there are beautiful little flickering lights and shades in every little forest and garden corner. The cat thinks it was all got up for her. It falls in with her life and suits it. Her nature answers to it. So it was got up for her, or she for it, which is the same thing. Every life is a centre, and all things are made for it, just as if there were no other. The leaf plays for the cat, and the cat for me.

These thoughts came dreamily through my mind, and I half received their significance.

“ How the little chinks are filled up ! ” I said to Hope, who came out behind me. “ And how much room there is for everything ; and everything has *all* the room ! ”

Hope waited, as she always did when I began at the end and talked backward.

"That cat has got the whole world to herself this morning. And there's an inch-or-two-long brown squirrel, that can as much as ever handle a cherry-stone, and a wall of great rocks was built half a lifetime ago for him to come and live in. Miles of wall, all over the town, if he likes, — full of safe little hiding-holes at every step, — for his travels. Everything suits so much more than it was made for. Everything thinks it is the main thing."

"Everything *is* the main thing, and everything else goes round and round it. Every little world takes the whole sky to hold it, — after all. Nothing is outside," said Hope.

People don't say "after all," unless they have had a question or an experience. What had Hope been on the outside of?

"That reminds me," she said again. "I must go over this afternoon to the Polisher girlses."

That was the way they spoke in Broadfields, of four old-maiden sisters who lived on the outside of everything. The "Polisher girls" they had been called for fifty years; and "the Polisher girlses" was the rustic possessive when people spoke of their home and belongings. Everybody had come to use it, they who knew better and they who did not.

On the outside of the town, — on the outside of their generation, — on the outside verge of life; outside of love and beauty and the interest and fashion of passing and growing things; outside of expectation for anything new, or more, in this world; and yet Hope thought of them when she said that everybody was in the middle.

Lodemia, or Lodemy, as the Yankee termination made it, braided woollen mats, wove rag-carpets, and quilted quilts. Mrs. Hathaway had a great coverlet of patchwork ready. She and Martha always kept a basket full of scraps, and cut them up into geometrical shapes, and illustrated science with them in the piecing together, in the long summer afternoons and winter evenings.

I said I would go to the Polisher girlses, too.

Something that happened made me remember the day and them, as they were that day, to this hour.

They just touched my life in a chance way ; they are all buried and gone now ; they had counted more than their three-score years then ; but like the wall whose builders were dead, and the trees whose seed sprang into young tenderness longer ago than men can remember, something of theirs was meant for me. Smallness and foolishness, — clefts and shadows of old patience and slow, strong living ; among many things, these are also even wrought and grown for those.

I did not know when or what I was taking ; it did not seem to me as if the two things by which I remembered that summer-day had to do with each other ; they stayed side by side in my mind with a seeming unfitness and impertinence, even ; one meant so much to me, and the other so little ; I came, by and by, to put them together.

We drove over in the wagon, Hope and I ; half an hour's jog around the outskirts of the town ; in the borders of woods, and along field-roads where there were no fences ; out on a high edge of table-land, we came to it,—a low, old unpainted house, set on a brink, off which you looked in an amaze as to how you had gained such height, upon a wide-rolling greenness of hill-swallows that were like the waves of a sea, and lost themselves in a hazy horizon-distance that deceived you into truly thinking that there an ocean-line began.

Outside of everything it surely was. The road stopped here ; there were half-a-dozen other road-branches, by whose forks we had come ; that stopped in like manner among these hill-pastures, where you could see scattered, here and there, white houses and grain-fields. They were like islands ; the paths to them all yiewless among the tossing green, as tracks across tumultuous waters. Four women, for fifty years, in that solitary place ; that was the Polisher girlses story.

We went in, and upstairs, where Lodemy was busy with her braiding work, finishing a great oval of bright colors.

The whole house was clean to a sweetness that let you smell the dry fragrance of its old timbers.

There were bare, white floors, with dark, worn veins and

knots that patterned them. The best room had a boughten carpet; strips of rag-weaving, and rounds and ovals of gay braid were laid down here and there by bedsides, and before dressing-tables; there were enormous quilts of tiny patch-work, and white spreads knit in shells. A dark little middle bedroom opened mysteriously off the staircase, and beyond into the long, sloping garret odorous with herbs and warm sunshine.

It was like going back through the half century past, beyond which these girls had been born and stopped. Stopped, so that their very girlhood embalmed itself about them; mummied them, all four, between eighteen and twenty-five. If there had been a gap,—if they had ever gone away,—if anything—that the world knew of—had happened to them, there would have been a measure for the time; they would not have been the “Polisher girls.”

But what sort of life had this been, that had just stayed on, and waited, and dried up like the old seasoning timbers?

What if my life should stop, and be the same for fifty years?

Life does not stop; it is death then; life goes on, though ring after ring of the tree-trunk, and leaf after leaf in the spring times, should be the same. There is more and more of it; and after a while its multiplied sameness is its breadth and glory.

Did anybody think of this, looking at the Polisher girls, wearing their hair turned up behind, with pathetic unconsciousness, in diminished threads, just as it had been in its young fulness? Little by little it had dwindled, and the teeth of the high tortoise-shell combs come through. Little by little, roundness and shape had fallen away, and arms and shoulders grown thin and flat; cheeks hollowed above, and become pensile beneath the jaws; noses and chins sharpened; white teeth discolored, and crumbled, and vanished; old fingers that had done much work, turned withered, and knobby-knuckled. Where was the breadth and glory that showed but this? How could their tree of life stand in the midst of the garden?

Remember and Submit ; Lodemy, and Frasie, standing for Euphrasia,—these were the “Polisher girlses” names. The austere religious father had chosen the two first ; his wife’s fancy had been permitted to indulge itself in the two last.

Whether it were the influence of her name, and of careful admonitions to live up to it, or her being the eldest, Remember, from her childhood, had been the thought-and-care-taker of the household ; Submit, the patient, satisfied receiver of things as they were ; Lodemy and Frasie represented the enterprise and imagination of the family.

“Lodemy is rather changeable ; she and Frasie take notions about things,” Submit said to us that afternoon, apologizing to Hope for the childishness of some alteration in the placing of an old easy-chair since she had been there. Places were all they could vary ; things were never substituted or renewed.

“It makes such a pleasant seat by the window, and leaves that nice, square, open corner to stand round in. We’ve each of us a room, now, Frasie and I, on our own side of the bed.”

The high posts and the curtains shut them off from each other ; they were, in fact, two dressing-rooms, with a closet opening from each.

It gave her all the idea of spaciousness that a palace could have done, this simple enlarging of a corner ; and the brightness of the unworn carpet, where the chair had been, was like an addition thrown out upon the old house. It was quite as if she and Frasie had a suite of grand apartments.

Frasie took us aside downstairs, where a back door opened upon a slope of green, when the nice tea was over which they would have for us at five o’clock.

“Tisn’t worth while to talk about it before Member and Mittie ; they don’t enter into it ; but Lodemy and I we plan it all out together, and it’s almost as good as if we’d got it. There’s such a look-out here ; if we had a stoop built on, a good, broad one you know, with a roof and posts, and vines growing up, creepers and morning glories, or even beans and hops, things that grow quick, and some grapes on the end, in the

sun. I declare we've had it over so much that I can see every identical thing, and smell the grapes ; it's quite old in our minds, you see, though we've never got the chance to do it. We sit out here when it gets shady, and tell on about it till it seems real. As true as you live, it's so old now that I think it a' most needs new shingling ! ”

“ Only the vines would get broken ! ” reminded Lodemy.

“ They might be careful, I should suppose. People *do* have vines and new shingles.”

“ I think that's beautiful ! ” cried Hope, her eyes shining.
“ You can have so many things so ! ”

“ Oh, I wouldn't dare tell you all Frasie's and my nonsense,” said Lodemy, longing to talk of it, and warmed to delight by Hope's sympathy.

“ The houses, Demie ! ”

“ Whole houses? new ones? ” asked Hope, drawing her out.

“ Yes, indeed ; Frasie's and mine. It's terrible silly, but she and I always have talked so, ever since we were little. Things might have been, you know ; and we've wondered about it, and pieced it all out, till sometimes it seems almost as if it was.

“ Hers was over there on the hill, and mine among the pine-trees in the hollow. Mine's a cottage, and hers is two-story,” Miss Frasie went on, lapsing into the present tense unconsciously. “ Mine is straw-color, and hers is white ; with green blinds, both of 'em. They're all furnished ; we've made lots of pretty things ; we used to go about and see, and hear tell ; and we'd always come back and plan over for ourselves. And then — ”

“ Frasie, you needn't tell everything ! ”

“ I don't know why, when it might have been. And they'd all have been so good and pretty. We named them all. And we know just how they looked and behaved, and needed to be managed. I'm afraid, sometimes, it was making graven images ; but I did fairly come to love them, certain true, I did. I feel as if I'd somehow had 'em and lost 'em, and might find 'em again, yet.”

How simple and silly these old girls had grown, or stayed!

"You can't see anything that there isn't," broke in Hope, positively. "Not just so, perhaps; but somehow."

That was what she always said; and her eyes, with their strange, golden color, always looked so glad.

All this kept running in my mind as we drove home again, through the shade and the sunset.

These old, singular women, artless as children, telling us their thoughts; these "Polisher girls," who had lived on, not outliving their young dreams; who had been "in the middle," by "seeing, and hearing tell, and planning over for themselves;" this word of Hope's, of things that must be,— "somehow;"—with it all mingled far, faint, beautiful perceptions of possible good and joy that all my life had been coming to me, as the South sends up sweet breaths into the chill and hardness of the North.

Somewhere, and somehow.

I shrank from everything that was most nearly definite in the peradventures of my life. They were points here and there, of things most beautiful that I had known or imagined, that started out upon me together, in a picture, a vision, without a name.

I did not stop to ask myself whence they came,—all pleasantness of pleasantest days and doings; kindness and trust, such as I had found and rested in with the Hathaways; knowledge, and truth, and high thought; beauty, and ease, and refinement, as I had tasted them with the Copes; reliance, even upon harsh, strong sense, and stern right-mindedness, as they were with Aunt Ildy, when one could go with them, and not, by misdeed or misapprehension, counter; cosey housekeeping and common work even, as Mrs. Hathaway and Martha and Lucretia did it; a reaching after all into which these might crystallize, making a life for me,—my own and not another's. A distillation of all sweet sense, and hope, and glad accomplishment; over all, the awe and beauty and tenderness of a religious gratitude and faith.

Life might be so beautiful; could one, then, think and see vividly nothing that was not or that should not be?

Only I remembered the four women who had waited fifty years ; with whom there had been time to have and to lose, in fancy, a life-full of that which had never been given into their hands.

Richard came out and took the horse, and Mrs. Hathaway met us in the keeping-room.

"There is news for you, and a note," she said to me. "Mrs. Cope has been here."

She took the note down from the frame of the looking-glass. It was directed in Augusta Hare's hand.

Of all the wonders of modern mysticism, that which seems to me least wonderful is the clairvoyant reading of sealed letters. I think I never took one of importance into my hand without a thrill of premonition. It is like looking into the face of one who is about to speak. The flash comes before the sound.

I might have laid that letter away, unopened, and it would all have come to me. I did not wait for Mrs. Hathaway to say another word. A strange disturbance ran all through me, as if I felt it from the ends of my life, out of which something was wrenched.

I knew not why I should hate and dread the news ; but I did. I went upstairs and put the note down on my table, and took off my bonnet, and sat down on the farther side of the room. I waited for it to be an old thing, before I took it up and looked at it.

In ten minutes it was an old thing. I went back to it and broke the seal,—a pretty gilt one, of perfumed wax,—and read.

Augusta Hare was to be married to Grandon Cope.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EAST DOOR — AT NIGHT.

It changed everything. I could not tell why ; it had no business to ; but it did, and I could not bear it.

It was nothing to me ; it never would have been ; I kept saying this over ; yet why did it put me all in a whirl to think of ? Why did I feel, as it were, all those possible fifty years seething and stirring and protesting ? As if a miserable tangle had got into the world just in my little piece of its time-pattern, and everything must break and snarl and go to shreds ? As if an angel had troubled the waters close beside me, unaware, and another had stepped down before me ?

A man like this to love a woman, and that woman to be Augusta Hare !

She to be the “main thing,” as her manner was, among the Copes, and in the life of South Side ! Everything else to go round and round her ! Something was possible for somebody, that I had never even thought of, and she had got it. I could not tell what it was in me, — envy, hatred, malice, all uncharitableness, — but something roused up in me, and raged. I could not have it so. It *was* not the right thing, and should not have been. Something ought to have interfered.

A man like this to love a woman — so ! That he should love all great, true things ; that he should search for God, and find him in his works ; that he should lead others up to these high loves and this holy reverence, — this was fit, and beautiful and blessed for all who came near, and whom he cared for, — kindly and a little. I would have been so glad to be but one of these. But that he should care thus, — that a blessedness like this should come down about a woman’s heart and

life,—so near me; that I should have this glimpse into what might be for one, no better than I, and never for me,—it tossed me in a pain and unrest and rebellion that I could neither comprehend nor control.

She put it on a little bit of paper, in a few common words, as if it had been information of a pleasure party. She sealed it up, deliberately and daintily, with scented wax, and sent it to me. It was a thing to thrill and flash from heart and eyes; to fill and overflow a whole being, and to touch others like a tide from heaven; to be told as spirits tell things, and in no poor human words. If it had been like this,—if she had been like him,—I could have been glad. I should not have been reminded of myself, or had myself revealed to me. I could have folded my hands and stood happy and humble, near them. If they had called me friend,—sister,—I could have walked with them in Paradise.

But I knew that I knew him better than she. I knew that I— How close it had come, and how it had passed me by,—this that I should never have thought of!

I had not loved; but I had found out that I could have loved. There was light—blinding light—on the whole long enigma of life.

This was all that was to be for me, out of the fifty, or sixty, or seventy years.

My life was one of the flawed and spoiled lives; and I had to live it out.

There are thousands of these lives; they have to be, to make up the world; but when one finds out first that one's own is to be among them, it is as if the world had been made in vain. All the years rise up and resist.

Take what was left and make the best of it? I had been almost ready to marry Allard Cope. I knew now that I never could. Him, last of all. He must never ask me.

I might turn to something tender and pitiful; a mother's love might have comforted me; but I could not take up with a lesser and different joy; at the very side, too, of that other.

I looked thus deep into myself, by that blinding light; and

found out this much certainly, that I could not arrive at before.

There is always something to be done next ; there is always something waiting ; a soul cannot go off into the deep with its trouble and hide there, and lie passive and crushed, forgetting life and flinging it behind, as it would like to do ; the body sits within four walls of a room in somebody's house ; and the next thing is to go downstairs again ; and pretty soon it will be dinner, or tea, or breakfast-time.

"Took to her bed." They say this of one who flings down the body ; it is all one can do ; there is only the bed, or the grave. I could not take to my bed for nothing that anybody knew of ; so I must go downstairs ; I must say something to somebody about this news that I had got. I would rather say it in the dark, than to go to bed, and have to get up and say it in the morning.

I went out and stood at the stair-head. I wondered where they all were, and who I should meet first. I would rather it should have been Richard. The old, trusting feeling came over me, of how sorry he would be to have me sorry.

I heard Martha singing and washing up the tea-things. Suddenly, there came a clattering crash, and a silence. Something — a good many things, one would think — fallen and broken. A thing that hardly ever happened, out of Martha's hands. It seemed as if it happened now, on purpose for me. At this moment I can believe it did. Ah, if we could perceive what care is over us, tenderly, in small things, smoothing them for our great needs, we should feel, in the midst of them, the comfort of a Hand that is like a mother's !

Everybody would be there in a minute. When things break everybody always is.

I heard Mrs. Hathaway start up.

"Why, Martha, do tell ! What *are* you trying to do ?" she called out, in a gentle, kindly astonishment.

"Well — I haven't made out much, after all," answered Martha, in a stooping voice, quite cool and ironical, as her way was. "I've only broken — a tumbler and — two plates,

and — nicked — the teapot-lid. If I'd had presence of mind, and let go of the pot, I should have just done it."

Hope and Mrs. Hathaway laughed, and I ran downstairs.

I went out to the east door, where I had sat in the morning. Richard came up to me from the gate where he had been standing.

Nobody had begun to wonder yet about me. All my life had contracted itself, with a spasm of pain, toward a point, and I had felt into the years, and yet I had only been away minutes.

I was in a hurry to speak then, in the shadow, since I must.

"I suppose you have heard the news, Richard?"

"About Miss Hare. Yes, do you like it?"

"No."

To this he answered nothing.

"I don't like it, Richard, and I don't want to talk about it. It spoils South Side."

He would take care of it, now, for me. I should not have to talk about it much.

"I'm sorry for that," said Richard. "South Side is a good deal to you."

I wondered how much he meant by that. I wondered if it had seemed likely to him that it would come to be any more to me than it had been. If people had thought that, it must be stopped. I could not stop it, now, too soon.

"It will be all Augusta, now. Everything is, where she is. I don't think I *could* have her giving it out to me in little bits. But that isn't it, entirely. I can't bear things that don't fit, and that oughtn't to be. It makes me ache, as Martha says; as if I knew better, and ought to have helped it."

"Miss Hare and you were friends, though."

"Yes. I like Miss Hare. There is a very good sort of liking that just belongs to her. But I don't worship her now, as I did once. And there isn't enough of her to be —" I could not say "Mrs. Grandon Cope."

"We won't talk about it, if you please, Richard. It hurts me. South Side is pretty much over for me; that is all."

I must have talked on, somehow, until I could say something

like this. Now it was done, I could not bear another word. I only told Richard that I was tired, and had a headache, and believed I would go to bed.

I went round and said good-night to Mrs. Hathaway and Hope, and left Richard to tell them, if he chose, what I had said to him.

THE SILENT SIDE.

“Pretty much over?”

“Did she really mean that?

“Only a pleasant place for her that a thing like this can spoil?

“She can’t care for him then.—Poor fellow!”

Richard Hathaway’s big heart really had this in it for Allard Cope, and it came first. Then, a great throb of joy, that could not help itself, surged up.

“If I might try now, after all. She’ll have so little left. If I could only give her what she wants!

“Why can’t there be enough of me, when I would give it all?

“There would be enough, at last, if she could wait. It’s the pouring of the river that makes the sea. It was giving away the little that was all, that fed five thousand men.

“Five loaves and two fishes.

“I wonder what put that into my head.

“Couldn’t the Lord bless love as well as bread? Couldn’t he make more of me, for her? If he bids me give, what else is it for?

“God be good to me! Make up the lack!—”

He did not know he said it. The word went straight up out of his soul, without lip-shaping. He brought what he had and laid it at God’s feet. There it was grand and beautiful, touched with the light of His countenance. A gift of all heaven for any woman.

But just because it was a thing out of the pure soul-depths, — no moulding of brain or trick of speech, — it was grand only between himself and God. He could not take it in his hands

or on his lips to Anstiss Dolbeare. He could only say some plain, poor, faltering words. What should she know by them?

He could ask her to come and live at the Farm. He could ask her to be his wife.

Suppose even she should come? Suppose he might have her, all his life long, at his side? All his life long he might not show her this unspoken beauty of his love that was in him. Why are souls set so close, and yet so far? Why must they always be asking after a sign, and no adequate sign be given? Was that what it meant, partly? The sign of the prophet Jonah? Must this heart of man go down into the heart of the earth to be shown forth clearly only at its rising again?

"God make it up to me and to her! God tell her what I cannot! —"

All this was in him,—this perception and question and prayer, without words. A Spirit moved with his spirit he knew not whence, nor whither. By his great love, his weakness and littleness touched the Everlasting Strength and Fulness. So should the river flow till it should make a sea where a dry place was. So, if she could believe and wait, there should be enough for her. If only she could perceive the gift, and what it was that came to her, and cease to hanker after the signs.

Richard Hathaway thought he could say something to Hope about it.

He did not know that if there is a woman-friend to whom a man can speak of his love for another woman, she may be too close to hear it without a pain. But if any woman could stand close to a man in tender friendship and bear this, it was Hope Devine.

She came out into the little porch after a while, for the coolness. They were apt to sit there under the trees these summer nights.

There were bright stars in the sky, and the long twilight had not all faded away.

He asked her if she would walk up the Long Orchard, to the brook-pasture wall.

Mrs. Hathaway sat knitting in the dark, within. She caught up a new, invisible thread, as she heard them move away together, and knitted that also. Also in the dark.

She had come to love Hope Devine as a daughter. She could see where there might be a rest for her boy. Pretty Lucy Kilham had gone long ago, and that had never been anything but a picture in the half-light of a mother's heart. Anstiss Dolbeare's restless nature gave her a pain for her. Now and then, Richard's watchfulness over it gave her a dread for him. She looked at them often as she had looked at them long ago, when they talked about the jasper. The way for them both, still, she thought, was all through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, before the Revelation should be light about them.

Hope Devine she believed to be one of those with whom God's grace began in infancy. She took religion as she took all things else, into her clear, rejoicing nature, where it needed not to be born with a pang. She simply did with a gladness that which she was allowed and admonished to do. She could not long for what there was not for her. She could not shut her eyes, and see, as she had said in her childhood, aught but what was truly there. Her prayers laid hold of the kingdom of heaven, as her imagination of its dreams. She did not doubt, or fear, or strive. She stood in the sunshine, and it illumined her through.

Is this a likening of the kingdom of heaven to a vision?

What is a vision, but a seeing? We call things dreams that we may dare be unbelieving of them. We shut our eyes and pray, and perhaps do scarcely better. God holdeth him not guiltless who taketh his name in vain. The soul must know that her Redeemer liveth.

Mrs. Hathaway would have been glad if Richard and this girl could love each other. So she sat in the dark, and knitted on, while the two went up the orchard together.

He began by telling her what Anstiss had said.

"She does not like it. It spoils her pleasure with the Copes."

After a pause, again, — "I did not think that that could have been. I thought — there might have been news of *her* and them — some time."

"Of Allard Cope and *her*, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I thought she would find out that it could not do."

"Hope! I must tell you. I was *afraid* of it. But I waited to see how it would be. Do you think I ought to wait any longer? Do you think there would be any use?"

See how he faltered with lip-language. See how little he could tell any human ear of what his heart told Heaven. How little he could paint of the crimson and the blue, — the suffering and the truth, — into which he had gone up, and stood steadfast.

This was his whole story of it; of the red sunset that faded into the gray; of the ripe clover-blooms that had had their June.

This was all he had to show for it; for the waiting that had been as years; because it counted the years that were coming, and had been ready to lengthen itself into them, silently, for her sake. And for the great, warm rapture of a returning hope, he had only the faint asking, — "Did she think it would be of any use — ?"

How was such a man as this to woo the woman he would have, — would give himself to, rather? How should she ever know?

But Hope Devine knew. Because she could shut her eyes and see.

Literally, it was her way when she wanted to see clear, to put her hand up over her eyes, and shut them, and "think hard;" then "it came," as the rest of the story-book that had not been printed, but in which she could read things beyond the "finis."

Under the trees, here, in the dusk, she stopped short, and put her fingers up against her brows, and bent her head, and held her eyelids close. Richard stopped beside her, and

waited ; hushing himself and holding himself motionless after that last word of his, as one does when one has disclosed a heart-secret ; as if the whole air were full of that which had gone forth, and a fresh vibration might flash into light, heaven knows, how much more.

He understood her fashion also, and that she would speak presently. He listened for her word with a tingling in every fibre.

"Not quite yet. Wait a little more. For her mind to settle itself down, and things to get where they belong. If you should speak like that now, you would only stir it all up again. She is just finding out."

That was precisely like Hope. Precisely her way, plain and practical, yet keen and far-seeing. Seeing more than she could define, but grasping clearly the nearest point. "Put your foot *there*," she said to herself or to another, in a maze.

No flutter and bewilderment of personal consciousness, at the kind of trust reposed in her, and of all that it suggested, far and wide. No stopping, even, to look at herself, and see how this thing concerned itself with, or seemed to, her. All that was behind ; she might come back to it ; but the first impulse was outgoing.

It calmed Richard, and put him at his ease. The electric air was stilled to an equilibrium, without a shock. A generous sympathy had taken in all that had so expanded itself, almost to a pain, between them, and absorbed it to a single thought that lay in her mind no stranger than in his ; a thing true, and of course ; to be kept sacred, also. There was always this rest with Hope.

"I am glad you know ; it has been all my life ; all my life that could have that in it, I mean. It *must* have something to do with hers."

He could say more, now ; he could almost let that silent heart of his speak out.

"I am glad too," Hope said, with the voice of a spirit of cheer. "I can't quite see how it will all be, but I can, almost. There are beautiful things out in the years, Richard. Some

of them are always for everybody. And everybody is *amongst* them, anyway."

"Hope! you help me more than any one."

Richard took Hope's hand, and held it fast.

They stood at the very top of the orchard, now, where the broad wall of rocks stopped them, over which they looked down the steep, green pasture-side at whose foot the brook blundered along, plashing up sweet breaths into the night-air, and breaking with a song, sung over and over, a little way into the great silence that reached up to the stars.

"I would like to help you—" and Hope ended there, and did not say the final word that had been coming.

Why could she not say "always"? Why did the word, unspoken, stand, as it were, and point with its finger, suddenly, down those years where the beautiful things were, and shut them off with the shadow of its pointing?

She did not wait to see. Hope could shut her eyes and have visions. She could open them widely, also, upon present things, and refuse, with an instinct, to see more.

She turned round, and faced homewards; drawing her hand, by the motion, away from Richard's.

"It does have to do with hers," she said, going back and answering what he had said before. "She can't go quite away from it. It is in her life, clear back, and far on. And by and by,—when she comes to know what it is,—it will be like the lighting of a lamp, Richard; done all in a minute, and shining through all the room."

Hope spoke in her peculiar, quick way; the words hastening themselves with the instantaneous urging of her thought; her perception was so glad, so beautiful; there was such joy in perception. To seize sight of things truly, and of how their perfect and unerring relations lay; to discern from afar off the *must* be, and how this was the evolution of a harmony that whispered itself from the beginning;—what if there were nothing of it all immediately for her, or of her concern?

She could think of it all more purely, more gladly, without that touch of a hand; without any reminder of herself; she

did not try to guess wherefore ; she kept her soul straight forward, and singly intent, and her act followed.

Mrs. Hathaway sat silent awhile after Hope came in and her son had gone upstairs. And then she put a sudden, plain question :—

“ What has Richard been saying to you, Hope ? ”

Hope answered as directly.

“ Something about thoughts of his, ma’am ; which I could not tell again, you know. Not but what he’d tell you,—or has, perhaps.”

“ I’m willing he should tell you his thoughts, child. Only take care how you answer them. I just wanted to let you know I *was* willing ; that was all. I should be well satisfied if you both had something you could tell me. I didn’t know but it might be coming, now ; and old folks are impatient. When the candle’s burnt low, you hurry to finish the chapter.—If it was to be God’s will, Hope, it would be my mind, that you should have your home here always.”

When she had spoken it out thus, quite plainly, Mrs. Hathaway leaned herself back again composedly in her chair, rocking gently to and fro, and her knitting-needles made their clean, quick sound against each other. Otherwise there was a perfect stillness in the dusky room.

Hope could not help the picture, now, that showed itself to her in a sudden flash. There in the dark, just as if she had shut her eyes and called it up of her own accord.

A picture of sunniness and full content — for some one ; of a strong, true, manly tenderness ; of a wide, cheery house ; brimful of busy pleasantness and loving cares ; of a man and woman leaving their young days behind, and living on into ripe, happy years ; of a story beginning over again that had begun over and over here, before ; of little children growing up ; of the old, bright “ mother’s room,” out of which motherhood should not die away ; of the big work-basket and the Bible, used right on, by somebody, into another old age ; of hands-full and heart-full, just the same only passed on,—household “ keys of the kingdom of heaven ” through womanly apostleship ;—these were “ the beautiful things out in the

years ;" and suddenly Hope saw them plainly through Mrs. Hathaway's plain words, — " It would be my mind that you should have your home here, always."

" Always." That had been the word she could not speak.

" More help to him than any one, — always." Why was it put so distinctly before her, as something that might be? When she knew so well what already was.

For a moment, between sure vision and clear honesty, she was bewildered.

And then her faith came back. " You can't see anything that there isn't, — *somewhere*," repeated itself to her. " Not just so, but *somewhere*."

" Mrs. Hathaway — dear ma'am," she began again, coming round and standing in the dark, close by the old lady's shoulder, " there was nothing like that in the thoughts he told me. It was nothing about that. Don't think about it again, please, so. I think I shall always be just *among* things. Helping a little, perhaps. I think people can be gladdest, sometimes, of things that are just a little way off."

Only a glimpse had come to Hope Devine, — a glimpse of joy that might have been given ; a side-glance at a suffering that she might have taken home to herself.

Self-love is a burning-glass that makes a focus in the heart. One can wait for God without an ache ; looking *on*, not inward. Hope never stopped to look at herself till she fixed a pain. She said it was because she could not bear pain. She turned away from it because she must be glad. Wretchedness would kill her.

The next morning, when the breakfast work was done, she went up the orchard, alone, to get green apples, while Mrs. Hathaway was making fly-away crust for a beautiful great pie.

Up the Long Orchard was a walk to do any one good, by daylight or evening light. Now, the sun was warm among the fruit, that began to look red and smell spicy on some early-bearing trees. Warm, here and there, upon the short, white clover that sprinkled the close turf ; while the green branches, reaching from side to side, made pleasant arcades, in whose groins the rare little humming-birds had come and built their

tiny velvet nests and flew murmuring about their young. These long arcades of horizontal spreading apple-boughs stretched up over the slope, aisle beside aisle, across two acres' width ; there were three acres' measurement from the roadside to the top wall ; it was a noble planting. The turf was soft and crisp under the feet ; the bees and the humming-birds made a continuous happy thrill upon the air ; the air itself was tenderly sweet.

Hope, living always "in the middle of her pasture," felt the delight of it in the full present moment, as she walked slowly on. But up at that top wall, built square and flat with double and treble stones, and the filling in of every stray pebble that had been gathered carefully out of the mellow orchard soil, she stopped, sat down, and thoughts came to her. Partly out of the pleasantness ; partly answering themselves to questions that moved in the deeper life underlying and outreaching the present, even in her blithely calm nature.

She had had a glimpse. She, as well as Anstiss Dolbeare. Something just shown her and withdrawn. Withdrawn from her own hands, — the beauty and the joy of it not hidden from eyes that look beyond the hand-reach.

She had thought too little of self, always, for anything to have grown up in her that could turn, now, to an instant misery. She had seen, for a moment, a thing that might have been. Only it was not ; and that was enough for her. That which was not given was as if it were out of the world, for her ; except that nothing was out of her world, or wholly refused her, into which she could enter with that wide spirit-apprehension which is the genius for living all life. It is the meekness to which nothing is denied ; which blessedly inherits the earth.

Not that this nature of hers was cold, inert, incapable of fire or passion ; it would only never burn in upon itself ; it was that divinely touched temperament, to which all fulness is possible, but which can wait, finding such fulness in the daily Will and Gift ; feeling the wealth also, out of which the daily gift comes ; feeding upon grains that drop from an exhaustless storehouse.

Up, there, where she could see out over the Nine Hills, as they were called, among which wound the busy brook that was almost a little river of itself before it poured into the real great river, and amid whose curves slept the beautiful double Spectacle Pond, she talked with herself, admonishingly, in a sort ; as if she knew things that self *might* long for, and that should be met with a reason and a satisfying beforehand. Because she could not chafe and discontent herself. Because it was the very law of her life to find a cheer, and a sufficiency at once, before she got restless.

"It's enough to be close *to* things," she said. "It's only really to concern yourself with them. You haven't time to live 'em all, and every one, for yourself. To know all about anything is to have it,—the good of it. I think it's easy for the angels to be happy so. They know, you see. It's easiest of all, for God.

"Perhaps he shows us things, sometimes, and puts them away again for us, to give us by and by, when we are bigger ; as mothers do with children's playthings that are too beautiful for them to have right off.

"If all the sunshine was poured on us, we should be blinded and burned. But we can see it on every little spear of grass, and in the water-sparkles, and on the hills, and the white clouds. That is the way we get it all.

"I'm glad—yes, I'm *glad*—I'm amongst it. And I have got enough ; or else, of course, I should have more. Something will be coming by and by. You can't have more than both hands full at once, Hope Devine ! And both hands *are* full."

Coming down slowly, beneath the shade, picking up fair, smooth, delicate green apples into her basket for the pie, she came upon Richard, standing under the tree on whose lower outmost bit of twig, in a crotch like a child's thumb and finger, one of the humming-birds had built. Some inconceivably tiny life must be nestling there in the little soft, lichen-covered ball, that one could hardly find, even at the second looking ; for about it, in and out among the leaves, darting in swift, half-viewless lines and sweeps, fluttered a morsel of mother-

hood that dropped itself suddenly, you could not have seen when or how, into its cunning home ; only the wee head and the thread-like bill, straight and delicate like a pencilling upon the air, showing themselves as it turned, alert and vigilant, poising itself again for flight, after it had done, goodness knows what, in a flash of time, in the way of breakfast or early lunch.

Richard was looking up at it, watching it as he did all small and tender things. A great strong man, with a heart in his bosom full of its own longings and questions and pains, with room in it none the less for what made that look on his face of gentle interest in this least bit of love and life, almost, that could be visible together. There was a smile on his lips and in his eyes, and he stood motionless lest the atom should be scared. He had watched it so, day by day, ever since it came there. He would not have had it disturbed or hurt for the whole value of his orchard.

He stopped here on his way across to a part of his farm beyond the brook-pasture where the meadow-hay was being made. He had been off among his haymakers early, before, and they had breakfasted at home without him. He and Hope had not seen each other since they walked and talked together here last night. There was a deeper color for a minute in the fresh red-brown of his cheek as she came near.

"Good-morning, Hope. It's a good day for the hay," he said.

"It's a good day for everything," said Hope, brightly. "It's a day to be real sure and happy in, I think."

"It *seems* like a day for everything to go right in, doesn't it?"

"Everything will go right, Richard, to-day, or some day."

"Hope!" cried Richard, impulsively, "you are my dear little friend!"

He could as well be shy with a sunbeam as with Hope. Her words and her look were like a radiant warmth to him, that drew him out.

"I am so glad to be that, Richard. Thank you!"

He met her clear, golden eyes for an instant, as she said this, her face turned frankly to his. There was joy and truth in them ; honesty and a tender peace.

His tall head bent down kindly toward her.

"I shall never," he said, "have anything —"

"Much better than such friendliness as yours," was the meaning of what was coming. It was the feeling in him, and the feeling trembled in his words.

When a man and woman get so far as this it might be very easy for them to get farther. Things might be so that this gentle friendliness, so felt and owned, should come back to fill a possible chill and deprivation. Many a woman, standing between two as Hope stood, would have been not unmindful or even improvident of this.

But the man of slow speech faltered again over his thought. Honest Hope stopped him before he gave her that which she might have waited for and taken.

"You will have it *all*," she said. "I can feel it coming for you. I am certain how it will be. Certain."

She said it to herself as much as to him. Keeping something down so, that never should come up. Turning her back upon something that she would not so much as look at.

"I won't — I won't — I won't — I won't — I won't!" pulsed itself in her resisting thought, as she ran, presently, down toward the house with her apples for which Mrs. Hathaway would be waiting.

"I won't — I won't — I won't —" it went on underneath, while she talked busily as soon as she got in, and flew about for knife and dish, and hurried to pare and slice, and asked questions, and set Martha chattering, and would not by any means, for half an hour after that, let a silence or a thoughtfulness return upon her.

It went out of her so, whatever it was that might have tempted her. She never knew its form or face or prompting. Only its shadow had cast itself before its coming, and she had outrun it. Souls are kept so, in a celestial ignorance, that *will not* know.

This was the girl who, six years before, had run with all her childish might away from a pleasure she was not sure that she might take.

CHAPTER XVII.

TELLING AUNT ILDY.

"I WOULD tell Aunt Ildy," Hope said to me.

Tell Aunt Ildy!

But the more I thought of it, the more it seemed the only thing and the best.

She would blame me; but I could not bear my own blame any longer. I could almost solicit harshness as a relief; as one presses and grinds an aching tooth. I was to be disposed of, too; I was verily in sore perplexity where to put myself. I could not stay any longer at the Farm; I could not go home, and let things be just as they had been. Nobody could help me much, unless it were Aunt Ildy.

She was coming out that very afternoon to tea.

It had been a hard week with me since I had heard that news. Troubles had come thickly. Everything hurried to a crisis.

Allard Cope came over the very next day, and wanted to drive me in to South Side, to take tea and see Augusta.

It was well, in one way, that there was more than one distastefulness in this. I could let a part of my unwillingness be seen.

"What shall I do?" I cried, in a whisper, to Mrs. Hathaway, catching her at the keeping-room door, on my way back to the parlor where Allard was. "I don't want to go; with him—so."

"My dear, if you do go," said Mrs. Hathaway, with placid deliberation, looking at me over her spectacles in her gentle, discerning way, "you must be ready for any questions that he may choose to ask you."

"O Mrs. Hathaway!" I gasped, in my despair, while I

trembled suddenly, and a hot shame poured its crimson up till my eyes brimmed with the pain of it. I shut the door behind us, then ; for, after that, there must be more said.

"Don't say so,—*please!*"

"I don't say it, Anstiss. It says itself. Haven't you known what you wanted to do about this?"

"There hasn't been anything that I could help. I couldn't tell. You see I've known them always, and they've all been kind. There, and here, Mrs. Hathaway, have been my pleasant places. All I've had. But I *don't* want—O Mrs. Hathaway, what shall I do?" It came back to the first beseeching question.

"Did he ever take you to ride?"

"No. There was never anything that I could help; only little things, like all the rest."

"This is different, then. You must stop here."

"But what can I say to him? All my life to let him be such a friend, and then, all at once—oh, dear! It's hardest for *us*, isn't it, Mrs. Hathaway?"

"It would have to be a worse 'all at once,' you see, dear. Yes; it is pretty hard for us. But 'right' is 'can,' always."

"Wrong is can't. That's as far as I can get. The other part is dreadful."

"You ought to go, now, Anstiss, dear; the promise is for everything: 'It shall be given you in that same hour what you shall say, and how you shall speak.' Only look straight at the right, and believe in the Help."

I held up my face toward her,—very pitifully it must have been, for there were tears in her eyes as she kissed me. And then I had to open the door, and walk across the hall to Allard Cope.

There was such an awful difference between the Allard of to-day and the Allard that I had just liked to be with in all our bright, pleasant, common ways, before. A thought in a man's heart like that which I could no longer ignore in Allard Cope's for me, makes his presence terrible. Terrible, even though one is glad, until the thought is spoken, and there can no longer be a separate presence or a separate thought.

"I am very sorry I have had to leave you waiting. But I don't think I can go back to South Side with you. I don't feel well to-day, indeed."

There was more than that in my face, though my face must have confirmed my words. I saw the trouble that was there reflected in Allard's. A trouble and a chill came into his.

After all, a word, even altogether aside from the point, can do it. I was to blame. I might have done it before, more kindly. I ought to have known my own mind. They were right about it. Aunt Ildy was right.. I had no business to wait, and say, How can I tell what may be? I should have let what *was* be seen. If I had looked straight at the right from the beginning, and believed in the Help, this — so bad as this — would not have been. I stood like a culprit before Allard Cope.

"I am sorry," he said. "My mother and Augusta will be sorry."

"Indeed, indeed, I am sorry too." The words came from a deep place in my heart, and my lips trembled, do what I would, as I spoke them. I felt myself pale and sad as I looked at Allard, and held out my hand. "You are all so kind to me; too kind; I never was worth it."

He knew that I was repentant for more than my refusal of his kindness of to-day. One needs only *be* true. The truth comes out, caring nothing for words. Any or none, it is all the same. He knew at that moment that he might not "ask me any question that he chose." At any rate, not now. A man goes away and thinks over things like these, and reasons them into such shape as he will, according to his temperament and the strength of his purpose. It might not be all done with, yet, by any means. But, for just now, it was averted.

With a few more sentences of regret and courtesy on his part, he was gone, presently. I had sent him away; I had begun the hard work that I must do, and the pain of my punishment was in my heart.

The next day after, Augusta came herself. Grandon had

been obliged to go down to H——, and she had taken the carriage and come out.

I kissed her, and gave her my good wishes, of course, as well as I could. And she put herself in the high light of a very pretty picture for me, and told me, graciously, many things out of her romance. And then she urged me about coming to South Side, and pressed me close as to my refusal of the day before.

"It won't quite do," she said. "There are times, even, when a woman can't have a headache. You'll lose everything, Anstiss," she ended, at last, plainly, "if you don't take care."

Then I broke out passionately:—

"I hope there isn't,—I wish to Heaven, Augusta, there weren't anything to lose!"

She just sat, petrified.

Now, at any rate, *she* knew what I meant.

"At this last minute, Anstiss,—you *won't* have Allard Cope?"

"Oh, don't!" I cried, as if my body had been wounded. "What right has everybody to put it so? He never asked me; he never said a word like that; he never shall."

"Then," said Augusta, getting up with a quiet, distant displeasure, "you have been exceedingly wrong—for years."

She was one of the family, now. She was going to be Mrs. Grandon Cope. She was going to be Allard's sister.

They would all think like that. They had come out of their way to be so very good to me,—they had meant me a life-long good,—and this was what I had done.

She went away, and left me very unhappy. But I could cry, and let my eyes be red. They knew what I had to worry me. Neither they, nor I myself, need look further than that. I could fling myself on the bed, and be miserable to my heart's content.

Mrs. Hathaway came up from her dairy-work, which was just done, with the perfume of it around her. She had been working up rolls of fresh, sweet butter, and she had had her

little dairy-lunch, — a glass of rich, yellow buttermilk. She brought one up to me, and, seeing how I was, set it down on the table, and came over to my side. Her breath was like the clover breath of kine, and her soft, housewifely, motherly hands were fragrant from their delicate employ, as she stooped over and laid her fingers on my flushed forehead, smoothing away the hair.

"Augusta is so safe, and satisfied, and hard," I said, out of my sobs, and my pillow, and my crumpled pocket-handkerchief. "It's so easy for her to blame. She ought to blame herself, too; it has been half her doing."

"We ought all to think of the beam, dear. It might account for a good many of the motes."

"I do think of the beam. I've been selfish, and foolish, and hateful. I can never get over it. I've lost half the good of my life, and spoiled other people's good. And there's nothing left."

"That's never true," said Mrs. Hathaway, "and we haven't any right to say it. That's the biggest beam of all, because it's unbelief. All the rest of your life in this world is left; and all heaven; and all God. He is behind and before. He can go back of the thing that troubles us."

"He don't alter it, though. It's past and done."

"He sees our repentance before we come to it ourselves. It all stands together with Him. You don't know what his mercy has done, answering the prayer that was to be."

"Oh, if we *could* pray backwards!" I hid my face deeper against the pillows for a moment, as I said this, and then I turned suddenly and confronted her.

"But you don't believe such things as this, Mrs. Hathaway. You believe in dreadful justice. You think somebody must be punished."

"I know there is pain in the world, because of sin. I know Who has come into the world and borne the pain that was in it. I know that so our sins were laid on him. And I know that he is mighty to help and to save; even to raise from the dead, and to forgive. When he forgave, he took away the evil. He went forgiving and healing, — the

two together,— all the way through. That is all I know. But that is peace."

"But you don't think it is for everybody. I never was converted. I never could find out how to be."

"I don't suppose the man with the palsy, or the man possessed with the devils, found out how to be cured. If they had, they would have had no need to come to Jesus."

"I never could find out that I had been, then."

"The woman who touched the hem of his garment felt in her body that she was healed of her plague. Once to feel him close; that is all, Anstiss; then you *must* believe; then you will know that you are beginning to be healed."

Was that all?

And yet there was a step; something to be done in the spirit, that was still mystical to me. To go to him as these people went; to fall down before him as he stood in the way,— one could do that; and when the bodily healing came, one could believe and glorify God. But he had passed into the heavens; whether heaven touched my spirit, or the spirit dreamed and deluded itself,— how could I tell?

I believed that I knew something, faintly, of the gift of God; my heart swelled at a high thought, or the clearness of a truth witnessed to again and again, till I was glad and sure. I longed for purity, and strength, and harmony; but this personal believing,— this direct healing,— should I ever come to that?

Martha had asked me one day, in her downright literal way, if I had ever experienced religion. She thought she had, I knew; I did not see why I was so far behind her.

"A little— sometimes," I answered; and I think I answered truth.

"Hugh!" said Martha, blusly; "perhaps, then, the Lord will save you a little— sometimes."

And yet I knew that it *was* a little— sometimes, with the best of them. They owned it; they declared as much from the pulpits; they prayed for "seasons of refreshing." Everything did not come all at once, or stay continuously. What did come more than had come to me?

It was not beautiful thought I wanted, now ; it was not recognition of wonderful types and meanings, and the gladness of sight that takes them in. I had gone wrong ; I was not fit to think of that New Jerusalem. I was down in the dust ; my life was a mistake, and I had put a tangle into others' lives. Who should help me out of this ? Who should comfort and justify me ? "Justify," — set right ; that was what it meant ; that was what I wanted. And then the phrase repeated itself in my memory, "justification by faith ;" was this the way of it ? A full and *healing* forgiveness ? Was this the "believe and be saved" of the Gospel ? Out of my own especial sin, and bewilderment, and misery ?

I got this glimpse ; but it was a mind-glimpse. I stretched forth my hands into the darkness ; but I did not feel Him passing by ; I did not hear Him ask, "What wilt thou?" I had no sense of a staying of my plague.

I could not find the invisible Christ ; I wanted a soothing and a tenderness that should come to me by tones and looks ; I wanted somebody to *say* words of help and comfort and reassurance.

Besides that, I wanted somebody to tell me just what I ought to do.

I wanted it more before those next days were over.

What possessed me ? And what possessed Richard Hathaway ? As true as I live, I had never had a thought of this before. I went up the Long Orchard. It was in the late afternoon. Not that same day ; but several days later.

I went up alone, and stood by the broad wall, and leaned upon it.

There seemed to be so much *rest* over among the hills. They were full of cradles and shadows. I sent my restless thought and pain out there, as if I could lay it down so, like a tired thing. I tossed in spirit among those soft green cushions and gentle hollows. That is the correspondence and suggestion ; that is what the earth bends and swells and dints for ; the eye and the heart would weary, like a bird at sea, over dead, pitiless plains.

I was away off there, unmindful of what was coming near.

Richard, climbing the pasture-side toward me from his meadow mowings, came close before I knew.

He came down along the wall from above, where he reached the brow ; he stopped beside me, on the other side. There was a wall between us ; it was truer than he knew.

And yet it was a comfort having him there, just that space off.

I think he hardly knew what to begin to say, now he had come there ; so he was awkwardly still for a minute or two. Then he had to say something, for he had not come without a meaning ; and it could not be a common word of unmeaning after that pause.

" You're worrying away the good of Broadfields, Anstiss ; you won't get the rest you came for." He remembered that I had said that ; he laid away words in his heart so, and thought them over.

" I can't help it, Richard ; I've gone wrong. You know what it is ; everybody knows. I didn't mean it ; I didn't know what I meant ; but I ought to have known. Everybody blames me."

" I don't blame you ; you'll know next time."

He spoke before he thought ; words of common usage such as people say in comfort for common mistakes. Then something in his own speech seemed to startle him, with an unintended application.

" I mean,— well, we all have to get wisdom by paying for it."

" If that was all ! If other people didn't have to pay ! "

" That's where it costs."

He paused. He could not help me there.

" I'm sorry, Nansie. I'm sorry for you — and everybody. But I don't know as you could help it ; I don't know as you need to blame yourself so much."

" Yes, you do, Richard. You know you would blame me if — it was your place."

There was no grammar in my blundering speech, of which I felt the strangeness as I made it ; but he understood ; he put himself in the place I thought of.

"I don't know, Anstiss; I shouldn't have much left to blame with; it would take the whole of me to bear it, I think."

What had I done? What did he mean? What was I rushing upon now? I hurried to say something different.

"I wish I knew what I ought to do. I think I should like to go away somewhere. To some still place where nobody would come. I wonder"—and I laughed, nervously, at what suggested itself, as I still looked off there among the quiet hills—"if the Polisher girls would take me to board!"

I don't think Richard heard what I said. He was intent upon what had been spoken just before.

"I never will blame you, Anstiss; I didn't suppose I should say anything about it yet awhile; but I've *always* been thinking of it; could you—don't you think—you might be contented at the Farm? With me? Mightn't we get along together as well as the rest of the world?"

[O Richard! Silently, his heart was brimful of beautiful things; of thoughts of how he would take Anstiss to his arms, and shelter her, and make her home glad for her all her life-long, if she would only let him; of tender longing to smooth every roughness, and soothe every pain for her; of humble self-disparagement that would not let him be eloquent in words; of the image of a joy that all "the rest of the world" could neither hold nor conceive of; of a prayer to God in this tremulous poise of fate, that this great joy might come to him; of a manly gathering of himself to bear what might be instead; of generous will that, come what might, he would keep his word and not blame her; and this was the best he could do with it! When the well is deep, there is so often nothing to draw with!]

"O Richard! No—no!—Take it back, please!"

We stood there, perfectly silent, unmoving. Neither dared remind the other, by the lifting of a finger, of a painful presence. Our words that we had spoken went out into the air, and sent their viewless vibrations far off among the hills.

Into the world and space ; full of the words and cries and moans of men, — the confused and crowded writing of human life.

[Anstiss did not see how pale he grew ; how the lips set themselves, and still trembled ; how, holding his body motionless, the whole man yet visibly reeled.]

I should not have dared look up if it had been a year ; it seemed a time I could not measure, that we stood so. Then Richard put his hand out across the wall that was between us. He lifted mine, and closed his fingers firmly round it.

“It is taken back, Anstiss.”

That was all he said. He laid my hand down, slowly, tenderly, upon the stones where it had been before. Laid it down, like a thing he gave up, gently. And then he turned back, and walked away, swiftly, down the slope over which he had climbed to me, and out of sight.

My hand, that I had refused him, lay there, dropped from loving fingers, upon the rough stones, where it had been before.

What different could I have said? If Richard could only have given me less or more! He was good, — too good for me ; and yet he asked me into such a mere every-day life! “To get along as well as the rest of the world ;” ah, if I put my hand into any man’s, I wanted so that it should be to climb! To get above the rest of the world ; I wanted, at least, that he should long for this, as I did, and more ; that looking up to him I should be looking up in the line that reaches from earth to heaven ; up the slope of the beautiful ladder whereon the angels of God go up and down.

He could give me home and peace, — peace that should reach just as deep, and only, as the circumstance of day by day ; but the *deep-sea* peace, — who should find that for me?

What was I that I should demand so much? Yet to be more, — this was just why I demanded it. It would not have been right to marry Richard Hathaway.

I might never love, and be beloved, as my nature craved. Well, that was God's denying. He had shown me what love and life might be, and he had said, It is not for thee.

The world is full; but in it all I might not, in a lifetime, come face to face with a man of such kingly spirit and presence as I dreamed of—as I had met in Grandon Cope.

I could not but think of him; he represented to me my ideal; yet it was not a disappointed hope or imagination, even, that connected itself, directly, with him. I had been almost content to be his sister; to live with one nearer my own level, under the benediction of such brotherhood; to grow toward the height with one who looked toward it as well as I. If he had stayed as he was; if he could have always seemed to me something so above all common love and liking, I should never have known better; but that he should love,—and that his love should be Augusta Hare! This it was that wakened me; that shook roughly all my half-formed thought and purpose; that threw into a confusion of disintegration all the half-crystallized possibilities of my life.

And after this, that Richard—dear, kind, good, commonplace Richard—should come and ask me if “we might not get along together as well as the rest of the world!” I could but cry out the “No—no!” that was such a thrust of cruel pain; but that was the only true answer to his word.

Yet I lay wakeful all that night, suffering the rebound of my own thrust. Why should nobody be happy? Why should one not only be denied, but be forced to deny others? If I could have been noble enough, might I not have set self aside, and done my best for so good a man as Richard Hathaway? Need I, at any rate, have been so cruelly abrupt? Need I have shouted that reiterated “No!” so instantly into his ears? I had acted from the self-impulse, only; I had been cruel.

Hope knew I was awake and restless; she gave over sleep herself in the early morning, and tried to say kind words to me; she thought I was worrying still over the old story.

I lay still in bed, while she got up at last, and moved about the room, dressing. When she was nearly ready, she turned

round to me from the toilet glass, in which I suppose she had been watching my face more than her own.

"Anstiss, dear, you have had no good of your night; you had better lie and sleep, and let me bring your breakfast up."

That word about breakfast, and the thought of going down-stairs, sent the shock of it all through me again.

"I don't care for sleep, Hope, or breakfast either," I cried out; "but I can't go down. It is more than you know; I can't see Richard to-day. Hope, I've treated him — shamefully!"

She dropped her hand, with the comb in it, down upon the table. She pressed against it, and lifted herself up, tall and straight and indignant, in her surprise. Something in the light of her clear eyes was like a blaze, and frightened me.

"Then you've treated shamefully the lovingest, patientest, grand-heartedest man that breathes."

She said it slowly, word after word, and then she was quite silent, and turned away from me again.

I would not say a syllable to justify myself, for I did not think I had the right; but neither would I lie there, a crushed, ailing thing. I got up with a kind of dignity, and began to dress.

I would not cringe utterly under her rebuke; for there was a half of me yet noble enough to stand in her own attitude over the other half. I could rebuke myself; so I was not wholly mean.

In a pride like this I kept silence, also, awhile; but if I would not let my worse self quarrel with Hope's generous anger, neither would I permit that it should seem so. Besides, I could ill afford, at this moment, to lose her love and counsel.

I let it stand so, as a thing neither disputed nor abjectly acknowledged; and I said, after a while, as one who had still a claim to credit for a will to act rightly,— "Hope, I need advice. I can't stay here. If I go home, nobody knows there, and things will be hard. I am all alone with my troubles."

I said it quietly, and with a certain strength. I would not plead for any mercy or friendship.

Then it was that she answered me, not unkindly, — “If I were you, Anstiss, I would tell the whole to Aunt Ildy.” At the moment I threw it aside, as a refusal of all counsel. It went for nothing ; yet I know it was Hope’s best thought for me. I know she would, in my place, have done that very thing. She had never seen Aunt Ildy quite as I did. She had a genius for discerning the good and the available in people, as she discerned it in things. Nothing was absolute rags and hopelessness to her. There was nothing that could not be “made to do.” She drew straight to the sterling metal in the midst of the ore, like a loadstone. She made for that ; she placed herself in relation to that alone, ignoring the rest.

She and Miss Chism were good friends. Aunt Ildy’s strong uprightness — even her hardness — had a charm for Hope Devine.

“ You knew what to calculate upon, with her,” she said. “ She expected everybody to do just right, that was all. There was something fine in her not being satisfied with anything else. It had been hard for a little thoughtless child, very like ; but a woman grown might be glad of a friend like her.”

“ See how good she would be to you if any real, great trouble — a trouble such as she could understand — was to come to you. She is just one of that kind.”

So Hope had said, one day, and so, now, I know she really thought that the best thing I could do would be to tell Aunt Ildy.

But while this thought lay discarded, for the time, in my mind, something else possessed me, half-aggrieved as I was with Hope, and longing truly, also, that some good and comfort, that I could not give, should come to Richard Hathaway.

Hope was kind, but there was a shade of reproachful gravity and reserve that stayed about her. It was hard for me to bear this ; it irritated me.

All at once, when we were alone, afterward, that morning, catching this look of hers, and remembering her words of him so deliberately and protractedly superlative, I spoke out recklessly.

"Hope, why don't you marry him yourself?"

Hope's cheeks were on fire, but her eyes looked large and calm, straight through me.

"I don't think you mean that, Anstiss," she said, proudly.

"No, I didn't,—I don't mean it, *so*, Hope. I beg your pardon, it was half in joke; but I do mean it is the best thing I could wish for him; and I do wish him good; I think he will ask you some time. He doesn't know how much you are to him. When he does,—ask, I mean,—if you can help it, don't say no. He deserves you; he is too good for me."

The color stayed in her cheeks; her eyes softened a little.

"You have no right to suppose such a thing; but I *should* say no."

"You can't tell, now, Hope."

"I can; because I couldn't take a thing that didn't belong to me, not even if I wanted it. Not even if I picked it up in the dust,—knowing who the owner was."

"But if the owner wasn't fit to have it; if it had been left behind, or thrown away?"

"If they didn't know,—if it was a child, perhaps,—I'd keep it as safe as I could till they found out better, and wanted it, and came back for it; it wouldn't be mine."

Hope did not stop for the parsing; but it was only the objective pronoun that was confused; in the light of her pure honesty, the possessive case was clear.

I was ashamed of my unconsidered impertinence; yet I was all the more sure of my inspiration. I was sure it would be a good thing if Richard Hathaway and Hope Devine were married.

Before Aunt Ildy came driving out to the Farm that afternoon in Wimbish's high, old-fashioned, two-wheeled chaise, I had made up my mind.

There were two hours before tea, and an hour after; I should have plenty of time.

Did anybody ever try the experiment of getting an opportunity to say half-a-dozen sentences to an individual, by that person's self, and find in three hours, or days, or weeks, even, that there was plenty of time?

I went upstairs with her, into the south-west chamber, while she changed her cap. I stood, gathering myself for the plunge, and waited ; watching the little white balls on the curtain-fringes bobbing in the wind, just as I had watched them that day, years ago, when I had had to tell about the bonnet. She stood just where she stood then, and was putting pins in her cap in the selfsame way, with the selfsame angle in her elbow.

I waited for the elbow to come down ; for there is no use in speaking to any woman in that position, putting a critical pin into hair or cap, with all the circulation and respiration stopped, and nerves in a twist, by the upward reach and strain in a tight dress. Anybody who would take anybody's else affairs into consideration, under such circumstances, would have no cap to pin, because she would be nothing else than an angel with wings and long hair.

By the time the elbow came down, Mrs. Hathaway came in, and when we all went downstairs we seated ourselves in the keeping-room with our work, and began to "spend the afternoon." Once, when Mrs. Hathaway went out, for a few hospitably demanded minutes, and Hope followed presently, I think with remembrance of the opportunity I needed, Martha seized the chance for a purpose of her own, which required no preparation of nerve ; only a glance from side to side, with her head very much in advance of the rest of her, as she came in reconnoitring to see if the coast were clear.

"Oh ! — Miss Chism, you *air* at lezhure, aint you ? I come in a-purpose to see. I was goin' to ask a great obledgegement of you. You see, I want a gown, — a calicker gown ; an' there aint no thing o' the name or natur' that you couldn't shoot straws through, an' that wouldn't make you cross-eyed to look at, in Broadfields village. I wanted to see if you'd buy me one in New Oxford, an' let Richard take it next time he's in. I'm willin' to go as fur as two an' sixpence for a good English calicker, *spry-colored*, an' tasty, an' one that'll wash. An' there's the money. Nine yards — three dollars — an' four an' sixpence. I shan't begrudge it if you pay the

whole; but if you can get it any more reasonable, so much the better."

By the time the money was unrolled from the tight crush of Martha's palm, and spread out, and handed over to Miss Chism,—two bank-notes, a new silver American half, and a Spanish quarter,—and Martha had once more acknowledged the obledgegement, and reiterated the stipulation that the calico should be "spry-colored," and finally departed, Mrs. Hathaway was in again; and after that I was not left alone with Aunt Ildy until just before we were called to tea.

It was no time then to begin. We could smell the hot, sweet, spicy flapjacks coming in from the kitchen. But I bespoke an opportunity when tea should be over. I touched Miss Chism's arm as she was going out before me; and made her stop an instant.

"I think, Aunt Ildy, that I'd better go home with you to-night, perhaps. I want to tell you something, after tea. Something that rather worries me," I added, lest she should imagine a communication of some quite contrary character.

She looked at me half sharply, for a second, with her "What now?" expression; but I think she only saw in my face an appeal and a confidence that touched her kindly; for she uttered a slow, non-committal, not unfriendly, "Well!" unbent her brows, and let me come beside her as we left the room. Afterwards she helped me to flapjacks at the table in a way as if she appreciated my reliance on her good-will.

It was often very much according to Hope's apprehension of her; that is, if one could only think in time. If you confided in her, if you gave her credit for good feeling, and trusted to it,—if you sought her advice; above all, if you followed it submissively;—you were on the sunny side, then. You were "en rapport;" and all the strength of her stern, stanch nature was thrown with and for, instead of against, you. It was no mean dependence. When tea was over, Mrs. Hathaway proposed going down the garden, or up the orchard; which would Ildy like?

"Oh, it don't make any odds to me. Down the garden, I

guess ; but I want Anstiss upstairs, first, a minute or two. You needn't wait. We'll come down."

So I followed her, feeling it harder, so, for the deliberation and expectancy ; yet easier, also, for Aunt Ildy's prepossessed benignity. Poor Aunt Ildy ! After all, she was left very much in her own hard, single, *old* life !

I determined to speak straight to what I wanted, whether it were there or not. To a hidden love for me in her heart ; to a hidden sympathetic possibility.

"Aunt Ildy," I began, "I'm in a real trouble. I want you to tell me what to do. I ought to have prevented it before ; I wish I had asked you sooner.—I know what Allard Cope means, now ; and I know that I can only be sorry for it, and — wish — he wouldn't mean it."

"Has he said anything?"

"No ; but he would have. I stopped it ; I wouldn't ride to South Side with him. Mrs. Hathaway saw ; she said I oughtn't — unless — "

"That won't stop it, if he's got it to say."

"I think he understood ; and besides — Augusta Hare has been here ; and she said things. I answered her so that — she knows. I don't believe he'd come out here again."

"Then why don't you stay? It's the best place. I don't see but it's all over."

Something like a shadow of hardness came again over Aunt Ildy's face. Something — her sympathy, or her intent to help — that had been coming, stopped itself short, and fell back, as it were, in her eyes ; took itself back ; not wanted. As if she had run to a fire, and found that somebody else had put it out. Aunt Ildy would not have liked to do that.

"O Aunt Ildy!" I hastened out with, "that's only the beginning! That isn't the worst.—Aunt Ildy — Richard Hathaway wants me to marry him, too, and I can't!"

"Too? I should presume not." Aunt Ildy smiled in a rather cast-iron way, at her own grammatical quickness and wit. Then she grew grave again, with a softening of real concern in her face.

"I can't stay here, you see," I said. "And what shall I

do at home? They'll expect me at South Side. Perhaps they'll send Allard over. There'll be all sorts of things. There doesn't seem to be *any* place for me."

I do not know why she did not blame me. Perhaps because a difficulty always roused her whole energy to grapple with itself; perhaps because, now that the realities of life had come to me so suddenly and thickly, she felt a sort of respect for my individuality. In my new relation to great questions, I stood — passed out of my familiar childishness and inferiority — in a sort of strangerhood, all at once. I had affairs; responsibilities; I was no longer in mere training and anticipation. I was not a child, to be tutored, — I was a woman, to be counselled; I had come to her with confidence. At that moment Aunt Ildy took a new attitude toward me.

She had done, all these years, what she thought was "good for me;" she had tried, with her rigid processes, to prepare me for life. Now life, that has its separate burden for each, was upon me. Her office was, as it were, over. She could set aside discipline, and be my friend. Especially, as I so entreated it. I think she felt my coming to her to be her reward. And doubtless it was. No good that has been truly meant, though in the midst of mistakes, shall, in any upshot of life, be utterly lost. In the end of things the angels shall always come and gather the wheat from among the tares.

I felt light of heart when my telling was over. Since Aunt Ildy did not condemn me, she was sure for help. I had laid my burden on ample shoulders.

"The first thing," she said, "is for you to go home with me to-night, of course. You can be packing up your things while I go down to Abby Hathaway. And mind and turn your skirts before you fold your gowns. And double the sleeves in the middle and pull them out flat. I'll see to something for you. Does Mrs. Hathaway know?"

"Not from me."

"I shan't tell her. You needn't pack up any worries. You can get them anywhere as you go along."

"You are very kind, Annt Ildy," I said, with my head in the closet, beginning to take down dresses. There was a little

oddness in my voice, I knew; but the smother of the closet covered that. I had learned not to be demonstrative with Aunt Ildy. Actions were better than words, was her doctrine. I could only determine within myself to roll up her lavender satin cap-strings very carefully, and to have all her things comfortably ready for her downstairs, when she came in; and to be very particular about my own foldings as she had charged me. For the rest, I would watch opportunity.

She was laying the best cap on the bed, and putting on her bonnet cap, over which she tied a handkerchief for her garden walk. She said nothing at all to my last words until she was just going out of the door. Then she turned her head over her shoulder.

"That depends — on behavior. When people deserve kindness, they get it. Pinch those ruffles up with your thumb and finger. You've kept that pink muslin pretty nice." Aunt Ildy never aimed direct at the thing that most pleased her, in her commendations; she always carromed. She was satisfied with me to-night. She thought I had behaved well. I was half of good cheer, even in the midst of my troubles.

But it was hard to bear when Richard Hathaway, doing just as he always had done, and always, I knew, would do, brought round Aunt Ildy's horse and chaise, and helped us in, holding the reins till we were seated; and then shook hands, friendly and warmly, with her first, and then with me. Not the least difference; no reminder in the grasp or in the loosing; he had "taken it all back." He kept it back out of his face, even. He never would trouble me with it again. I knew that I left a noble heart there behind me, holding its own pain, silently. At that moment, at least, I knew this of Richard Hathaway.

Yet the way in which he bore himself comforted me, in spite of my knowledge, already; just as he meant it should.

The reaction of rest began to come, after the agitations of so many days; I began to be drawn from my introspections to things outside, which took me almost with surprise that they should still be there. The evening air blew calm and cool; the old road lay between its familiar woods and fields; Aunt Ildy slapped the reins up and down on the back of

Wimbish's easy-going roan ; she left me in silent peace for a whole mile or more. All that way the rhythm of the slow-dropping hoofs had been lulling my busy thoughts, and hushing sorry ones away to sleep ; heart and brain cannot throb and hurry to such a measurement as that. Truly as I grieved for what I had done, I seemed to have left it more than a mile behind me.

Aunt Ildy spoke at last.

"I've been thinking," she said, holding the reins up very high and tight, one in each hand, and keeping her eyes unswervingly upon the horse's ears, as he took a mild trot, coming successfully out of a down-hill creep upon a stretch of safe, level, meadow road. "I've been thinking it over. How should you like to go to Boston?"

It was like the thunder-clap with which the genie came with gifts, into the "Arabian Nights."

That she should have thought of this on my behalf! That such a thing should be "worth while" for me! It was as if I had died, and found out that they *would* have mourning and a headstone for me, as to which I had wondered in my childish days. I shrank within myself with fear of too ready appropriation of such consequence ; with humility and undesert. I always did so ; I believe I should have done so in my grave, if I could know they were making any fuss about me overhead.

"Well!" shot Miss Chism, sharply, into my silence.

"O Aunt Ildy, what can I say? It's a great deal too much to do for me. And it's — it's the *kindness* I care for!"

"Hugh!" said Miss Ildy, through her nose. But those four consonants held her displeasure ; it was not in her face. "There's no need of any highfalutin about it, as I know of. It wasn't all for you. I had some thoughts of going, before. You haven't answered me yet."

It was very hard to be just properly and spontaneously grateful, and yet not to assume too much. Of course it could not have all been for me. But she did not make her cake all for me. By no means ; Miss Chism was careful of her cake,

and kept it mostly for worth-while occasions ; yet sometimes she would cut me a piece and offer it ; then I was all the more thankful.

I calmed down my effusion instantly, however.

"Whether I would like it," said I, suppressing the exclamation point, and with as matter-of-fact intonation as a district school-child repeating the word before spelling. "Yes, Aunt Ildy, I just exactly should."

"Then I've about made up my mind that you just exactly shall. That is, if nothing happens. I'm going to see about it. You'll want new sleeves to your stripid muslin-de-laine ; it'll do to travel in, and to wear cool days."

This was almost too ordinary and comfortable ; it brought my self-reproaches back. I began to be jealous of her not blaming me ; I was getting off too easily ; I could not ignore as she did. In all this there had not been a word of poor Richard Hathaway, and what I had done to him.

"Only," I said, "I have no right to pleasant things ; I have made two people unhappy ; I can't forget that."

"Well, I don't know," she answered, very coolly. "There isn't much telling, perhaps, about that part. Maybe it's more than an even chance they'll both get over it."

I was thrown back again, as having assumed too much.

"At any rate, a girl can't marry everybody that asks her, and everybody else '*too*,'" she went on, quoting my word, and reproducing the cast-iron smile. "Somebody has got to stand aside. And you can't say no until you *are* asked. It's best, when you can, to have it straight out and settle it. I hate things daggling on tenterhooks."

Aunt Ildy was thoroughly on my side, for once. It was manifest that she was, for some reason, well content with things as they had fallen out. And I could not help drawing, silently, two other inferences from her cheeriness, not to say slight exhilaration of spirit. That she had not known much of this pain of saying "no," herself ; or if she had, that it was in the comfortable long ago, where pain fades out and only pleasantness stands. That her lovers had got bravely over it. Also, that it might be possible she was rather glad than other-

wise, after all, to keep me at home a little longer. Out of her narrow living, perhaps she would have missed even me.

The mere contingency of this drew me toward her. I sat, resolving upon how I would do everything henceforth, for her and Uncle Royle ; how I would bear all her hardness patiently, and keep up zealously to all her requirements ; never forgetting that she had stood by me, when my trouble came.

A faint flavor suggests more than satiety can give. A very little gentleness, an ever so small relaxing, toward me from Aunt Ildy, stirred me more than tender kisses and embraces from another. I kissed and embraced her that night in my heart.

It went on so through the whole. I had never, apparently, made such a stroke for myself in my life.

We had no more talk, all the way into New Oxford ; Uncle Royle helped us out at the street door, and carried my box upstairs. Then he drove the horse back to Wimbish's stable ; and Aunt Ildy asked me if I would have anything to eat before I went to bed. That finished it with me for the night. I thanked her, and said no ; but I went upstairs, filled ; fed in my heart with almost more than I could hold of unwonted tenderness.

She treated me like company ; almost like a stranger. In one way, perhaps, I had become as a stranger, with a strange interest, instead of a familiar contempt. I was a girl with a love-history about me ; I was something quite different from little Anstiss Dolbeare ; for once, I was "too big a girl," in a way greatly to my own advantage.

Aunt Ildy's ideas and purposes, especially of good will, were like powder-blasting ; a great deal of quiet, perhaps carefully secret drilling, that took a long time ; then a sudden touch, Heaven knew how, to the few grains of some quality of generous expansiveness that she kept by her disguised in ordinary in a black inertness ; then a sudden outcome, explosive, from which one could only stand aside. She would by no means let you draw close. It was a hands-off, gunpowder beneficence.

She did not say a word more to me of our journey for two

days ; then, all at once, over some scalding sweet-pickle she was watching at the kitchen fire, she lifted up her head and spoke : —

“ I’ve about made up my mind to another thing. Your uncle hasn’t any objection, and I shall ask Abby Hathaway to let Hope Devine go with us. Hand me the skimmer — quick ! There — now the allspice. You may call Lucretia in to lift the kettle off. Fly round ! ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

BOSTON ; AND THE HOLGATES.

NEITHER Hope Devine nor I had ever been a journey in the cars. The railroads were yet a novelty. We had to go down to Palmer in the stage, a half-day's ride ; and beyond that the steam-rush of three hours was a wonder and an excitement.

People felt, then, all the travel that was concentrated so suddenly into such little space of time, as they have forgot to feel it now. Nobody calls it travelling to go from Boston to Berkshire, to-day ; it is only stepping through the house from the front door to the back that opens into the hills. If you are really going *out*, you don't more than get your gloves on as you pass along the hall.

The grand hall that runs through the old home building ! It used to be the perilous Bay Path, before the rooms were all finished at the rear, or the floor laid quite through. Afterward, it was the pleasant highway, beside which comfortable doors stood open all along. We have forgotten about that, now ; we don't know what half the rooms are like ; we go over the whole world as we read its news, by captions. It is just Alpha and Omega ; we start from some whence, and are expressed through to somewhere ; we get in at one depot, and out at another that looks just like it ; as to the between,—oh, that was on the back of the railway check, or among the much-crumpled leaves of the "Guide."

Aunt Ildy and Hope and I did not go to Boston so, that day. We knew that there was to be sleight-of-hand about it, but we kept our eyes wide open to the operation, and meant to apprehend as much of it as we could. Brains wouldn't stand the stretch of that determined realization of detail, on

the long modern routes. People soon learned to take to their railway libraries, and to leave off looking out at windows.

We began, or Aunt Ildy did, by laying in such a stock of provisions as one might take now for a seven days' journey through to San Francisco. There was no knowing how much of an interval there would be between the arrival of the stage and the starting of the train from Palmer, or whether it might not be gone before we got there. Steam was a strange, new agent, not to be blindly trusted or calculated upon.

At any rate, we were to dine out of our basket. And a very nice basket it was to dine out of. Travelling was like sickness,—an emergency that brought out the most sacred of Aunt Ildy's stores; things from the top-shelf and the inside cupboard, set away to "keep on hand." I never quite realized how these things ever got used up. We made them every year and put them by; we were hardly ever sick, and as to journeys and exposures and needs in that sort, this was the first I have memory of. I believe Aunt Ildy secretly gave many a good thing to those whose emergencies came oftener. She would not let her left hand know it, if her right hand did; it was not her way to own to any tenderness of sympathy or generosity; besides, she would not have given her left hand the precedent.

We had plum cake, made for unexpected company, and by no means brought out when there was premeditation sufficient for beating up something of the lighter kinds,—plum-cake rich enough for an unexpected wedding, and whose flavor toned and mellowed with a reasonable age; there was a little white paper-bag of candied orange-peel, such as nobody but Aunt Ildy knew the secret of; and there was a small bottle of her oldest cherry brandy, since there could be "no knowing," either, what might happen to some of us before we got there. Something terrible might easily have happened, if we had been going much farther, and if we had kept on faithfully with that basket. The cold-boiled chicken and the buttered rolls, the rounds of pound-cake gingerbread and the slices of new cheese, were the pieces of resistance.

"It makes me feel so grand!" said Hope Devine, her eyes shining, and her whole face lifted up.

The puff and the rush of the first few minutes were over, like the tug and flap of a great bird's wings as it rises, and the train had taken its pace, the swift, skimming shoot across the country, that made the post-and-rail fences sweep by in blurred lines, and the green fields scud under us, and the trees and the houses waltz around each other and out of sight, away through the whole reach of the shifting landscape.

"It makes me proud to be one!"

"One what?" said literal Aunt Ildy.

"One — anybody," Hope answered, laughing.

She took for granted people knew what she meant. She was apt to speak in half sentences, and it was easy for me to understand her so. The rest was in her face.

Something kindled and flashed forth from her now, like the soul of the force that was urging us on. The pride and the glory and the triumph of humanity were exultant in Hope Devine, taking her first ride in a common railroad car.

"It makes me think of the 'powers.' 'Powers and principalities,' and the 'Prince of the power of the air.' There are such great things; and they seem so awful. And yet they are only *things*."

She went on with something else, to herself, in a tone hushed just below the covering rumble of the wheels. She thought she spoke in secret; but I heard a word or two, and I knew the rest.

"Nor life, nor death, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature —"

Her heart and her face finished that also.

"It doesn't matter; not even what's to *come*; how much they find out, or what they do, among the *things*, does it? It's grand, and splendid, and it grows almost frightful with the ever-so-much of it, — it crowds so; but it isn't the way we've *got* to go, and it can't hinder, nor change; there's a short way out of it and overhead of all. You can shut your eyes and be there."

Absent from these things and present with Him. Hope lived just so simply and sublimely close to Christ and his heaven. The world could not confuse her; the powers of the air could not stop her short with their magnificence, their triumph, or their terror.

To go down among the great places of the earth with her would be like going with one of the angels.

Who knows what going or doing are like to any one, only seeing the outside of it? We were just two country girls, with a plain old lady and a big dinner-basket and railway tickets on a train to Boston. A train to Boston was an old story already. What did our newness signify?

I think we all felt grand when we steamed into the little old Worcester passenger-house, among a few street children, gathered to "see the cars," some groups of people waiting to meet friends, and a good indication of future possibilities in the way of a hack-driver throng. We were the Western Express,—"Express" sounded fine and important in those days,—and the rails were hot behind us with our hurry. Aunt Ildy sat up like the prow of a ship sailing in from far seas to her moorings. Hope's eyes were full of light and expectation, and I felt my heart beat quick as I came into the beginning of the city that I had never seen.

It was a pleasant house that we went to, in the neighborhood of Summer Street and Church Green. Great crowns of forest-trees surged up among the chimneys, and the sidewalks were still and shady, and the houses had little gardens in front. Children rolled their hoops, and babies' carriages went up and down, where heavy drays and cases of merchandise fill up the whole street-way now, and block the pavement before great warehouses.

Boston was in her pleasant, young matronhood, then. She wore her own hair, as it were; and had not capped it with any foreign tawdriness, or taken to false, staring fronts. She had not had her dear old irregular teeth out, that gave half the home-sweetness to her smile, and replaced them with the square, stiff, polished blocks that grin from old, care-lined, art-finished faces.

Boston was individual, and not conglomerate, as it is today. There is only a little bit of the old place left, now; streets of charming houses without any modern improvements, over behind Beacon Hill, and beyond the State House. The South End is a piece of New York patched on, and Back Bay has been filled up, and a section of Paris dumped down into it.

I am glad I remember it as it was.

In this still, simple Boston, where, just behind her busy wharves, there were places to live and to think in, there were many things beginning besides railroads and steamships. We came into the midst of these, or the sound of them.

It was the time of the first flush and ferment of rational, moral, physiological, philanthropic, transcendental, æsthetical philosophy. Miss Sedgwick had written "Home," and the "Rich Poor Man," and "Means and Ends;" "Combe's Physiology" was being desperately studied in young ladies' schools. There was unlimited and unmitigated cold bathing; and calisthenics were coming into vogue. Theodore Parker was preaching; Emerson was thinking great thoughts aloud to a wondering world; Brownson had come out with "New Views;" Margaret Fuller was expanding the rare, strange blossom of her womanhood; and girls of seventeen were reading Carlyle. "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful," bound into a watchword, were rampant on men's lips. A grand watch-word; so is "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality;" the thing is to rise to the real height of it; to reach by it to the more, not to pervert it to an excuse for dropping to the less, or the worse.

Coming to stay with Mrs. Holgate, Aunt Ildy and Hope Devine and I—three diverse and unaaccustomed souls—entered into the midst—or the edge of the midst—of all this.

The Holgates had gone to a lecture when we arrived. The "family-reliance," Liesie, or Relief, got tea for us, and made us comfortable. People had family-reliances in that old time, which gave them leisure to run after the new ideas. Now, they have been running after them so long that family-reliances have ceased to be educated, and the stock has run

out. There is danger that we may have to begin anew this circle of humanity, and not come round to the "true, the good, and the beautiful" again, in the abstract, for a few generations of women more.

Mr. Holgate had been at one time concerned in a bookselling and publishing firm. Mrs. Holgate was a distant connection of the Chisms. The business and the cousinhood together had kept up a sort of pre-railwayite intimacy; safe standing invitations were exchanged; "when you come to town," or "if you get out our way," which seldom happened. Yet now and then Uncle Royle spent a night at the Holgates', when the transactions of trade took him to Boston, or he went there to dinner, or for a Sunday, now and then, during his service in the legislature; and Mrs. Holgate and the girls had once been to New Oxford.

Mrs. Holgate was a woman whom I should shortly describe as having begun aesthetics rather late in life. They sat somehow curiously on the substratum of homely habit and unintrospective common sense. She had a way of snatching up her raptures, as if she had all at once remembered them; or of making a supererogatory use of them, as of a new mental elegance or contrivance, that she had done without all her life, but which it was the right and proper thing to find essential and inevitable now.

She was stout, and looked externally what people call "settled down." Very much so, indeed; and as if the settling had taken place a long time ago, and could not easily be disturbed; as if you would hardly expect new modes of thought or action from her, or a new expression in her face, any more than new ways of doing up her hair, which women past forty were not apt to affect in those days.

I noticed all this of her in five minutes after she had come in with her daughters, a good deal heated with her summer-evening walk, and looking as if dogdays and metaphysics together were considerably too much for her.

Boston, as I said, was still green with gardens then; and there were hushes of home quiet in cool, watered streets and unprofaned "Places," where vines covered the house-fronts

and caged birds sang in the windows, that almost feigned a feeling of the country and the woods ; and people were content to abide there, for the most part, even amid the August heats.

The two young ladies were bright-looking, handsome girls, with hair tucked plain behind their ears, and prompt, straightforward manners, and a very Boston-y air of determined sense and intellectuality. A process-of-culture expression pervaded themselves and the house. A little anticipative it was, also, claiming result by faith and purpose. As for instance, a reading-stand in a window, which we afterward found to be the younger sister's particular corner, held a large German dictionary open upon it, and a volume of "Schiller" in the original rested beside. We noticed subsequently that her actual studies were as yet limited to the rudiments of the language, but she set what was to be before herself and others with a truly apostolic pressing forward to the things before.

In her children's babyhood, Mrs. Holgate had been simply a little romantic, in an old-fashion of romance ; and had named her daughters respectively, Harriet Byron and Corinna. At the present time she especially felicitated herself upon this second baptismal choice, which I think she had probably rather hit upon originally for its prettiness, than through any enthusiastic and appreciative intimacy with Madame de Staël. Corinna herself evidently blessed her fate in this respect, and tried to live faithfully up to her christening, as Harriet did to her nose, which was rarely and delicately classic. Corinna undertook severe literature, and deep research ; Harriet devoted herself more to the beautiful in art and poetry.

They had been this evening to a conversational class ; after Margaret Fuller ; subject, "the mythology of the Greeks."

To unravel an old myth,—to find the why of it,—the abstract principle,—this was just now what interested and excited above all, and rewarded with its highest delight the mental enterprise of a certain portion of the young, progressive intellect of the city of progress.

It was all exceedingly well ; place and time according and proportionate ; but there was a New England excess in it all. Everybody must needs do the same style of thinking ; and they must be at it all the time. Because great minds were comparing the old and the new, finding the lights that fall from different and far-off points in all the ages, sifting truths, and giving grand abstractions to the world, all they who listened, and who were fired by the watchwords, Progress ! Culture ! must dip into the selfsame abstractions ; must find a myth in everything, and begin all their sentences with adverbs.

They were like children rolling their forlorn and much-manipulated bits of dough from the maternal pie-boards, till, seeing it, one got sick of the pies beforehand, and mistrusted the whole baking.

There were circles *and* circles ; as there are in everything. There were those who were, and those who only ambitioned to be ; those who rode their chariots of thought for the sake of the whither they might bear them, and they who liked the equipage and its blazonry, and the stepping in and out before the eyes of the multitude.

There were restless spirits also, to whom the old was tasteless and lifeless ; who seized eagerly these roundabout fashions of coming back to what they had and knew already through fresh and toilsome reasonings ; taking back and forth from each other's fingers the threads of truth in a perpetual cat's-cradle of fancied discovery and invention ; crying out to each other without ceasing, Behold, now, that is truly something new ; that, indeed, is wonderful !

It was a fever that had its day ; that rages yet, as fever always does, in its breeding haunts, whence it bursts forth now and then as epidemic.

The Holgates had taken it — badly ; we came, as it were, into the midst of an infection. Aunt Ildy looked about her, at first, in pure mystification ; then she began to behave as if she thought they had got a plague ; and to go round with her nostrils metaphorically stuffed, and to do her duty vigorously, by scattering, from time to time, some pungent, if not ill-savoring antiseptics.

It was certainly a change for me, and a break upon the old, wearing lines of thought ; but it was not precisely what Aunt Ildy had meant and looked for.

It stirred in me some of my own old wonderings and speculations ; I could not help entering into it enough to find out a little of what it was ; sometimes I got light, and sometimes I grew confused.

But I was stayed on the right and left,— by Aunt Ildy's uncompromising orthodoxy and sarcastic practicality ; by Hope Devine's strange, straight vision, right through all mysticism and bewilderment, to what truly was.

I do not believe that in all the community, so touched with strange fire, there was such a curious conjunction of elements, to test and neutralize each other and evolve some safe result of life to a true longing for the living reality, as was met here in Mrs. Holgate's house.

I remember bits of conversation, that sprang up now and then, over a breakfast or a tea,— after a chapter of some new book, or a surprising modern aphorism, or a fresh “Orphic saying ;” or in our rooms at night, between Hope and me, and sometimes with Aunt Ildy, also, when we asked each other how it all seemed, and what we supposed would be the upshot and the outcome of it all.

I remember little momentary situations, and the look of everybody, stamped like a picture upon my imagination by the force of some sudden peculiarity of act or word.

I shall never forget how funnily Corinna Holgate startled us one day, as we all sat in the back parlor with our different morning work,— she in her window with portfolio on lap, and various sheets of scribbled paper lying about her, on which she was making up some abstract of a “conversational,” or sketching some outline of ideas preparatory to one that was to be.

Still on the Grecian myths ; still puzzling for clever solutions and brilliant suggestions ; trying to recollect clearly what had been propounded and explained last time, or put forth in questions to be answered next.

“*Why*,” she demanded electrically, like a thunder-clap out

of a far-off cloud of philosophic abstraction, across the un-thinking and unexpectant summer silence of our commonplace,— “*why* was Venus fabled to have arisen from the foam of the sea?”

“Because you must be clean before you can be beautiful!” shot back Aunt Ildy, quick as a flash,— an irony of common sense out of a swift, frowning cloud of contempt.

Hope and I laughed. Harriet and Mrs. Holgate, slow to receive and discern, looked up as if they did not quite know whether it were meant as Orphic or not; but Corinna, after a second’s breathlessness, jumped to her feet, let fall her papers in a Sibylline shower, rushed to Miss Chism, and, dropping on a cricket at her feet, accepted her and her word as an advent and an inspiration.

“Why, that’s grand!” she cried. “That’s a real thought! That’s insight! I’ve found — a soul!”

“Better keep quiet about your luck, then,” said Miss Chism, drawing away her knitting-yarn from under Corinna’s elbow, and shifting slightly her position away from the heroies. “A chicken doesn’t peep when it’s really got its mouth full!”

Corinna did not care a bit for her snubbing. It was only a spur.

“Why won’t you own up? You *do* think, Miss Chism. What do you deny yourself for?” And then she quoted Emerson; about “our own rejected thought returning to us with a kind of offended majesty, from the lips of others.”

It was sufficiently ridiculous; and I believed, myself, that Corinna was half funny and dexterous in defence, as a bright girl might be, and half in earnest, determined to win Aunt Ildy over.

“Whatever I think, I choose to *think*, and be done with it; I wasn’t made to chew a cud — or to count my breaths, to see how many I take in a day.”

“Miss Ildy! You’re epigrammatic! You don’t know how clever you are!”

“There — let me alone! Don’t snarl my yarn! I don’t believe you know how big a fool *you* are, or will be if you go on!”

"I mean to go on till I *have* found out, and that's the height and 'extreme small apex of human knowledge. See how you've snarled *my* yarn!"

And she went back and began to gather up her scattered papers.

Aunt Ildy liked the girls,— their fresh, modern brightness, and their prettiness; especially Corinna's good-humored daring, so different from what she had hitherto encountered; if it had not been for these things, and Mrs. Holgate's genuine, old-fashioned, glad-to-see-you hospitality, which all her transcendentalism could not alter or affect, she would have gone home.

CHAPTER XIX.

SARTOR RESARTUS.

"It's the queerness of it," said Hope. "They're at such great trouble to do things over again. It is just as if people should go to contriving shoes, or how to make wheat into bread, when they have been fed and shod all their lives long. Why can't they take what there is in the world?"

"There are thoughts to-day that haven't been always," said Corinna.

"New receipts," said Aunt Ildy.

"There's growth, you know," said Mrs. Holgate, "growth, and evolution; *evolution*," she repeated, as if she had groped against *that* landmark in the dark, and so laid fast hold of it with both hands, valiantly. "Who was it said it, Corinna,—'Everything becomes; act and being blossom'? That was beautiful."

"Not altogether new though. Carlyle says it. 'Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working Universe; it is a seed-grain that cannot die; unnoticed to-day, it will be found flourishing as a Banyan grove,—perhaps, alas! as a hemlock forest,—after a thousand years.'"

"It is older than that," said Hope, quietly, not a whit overawed by hearing Carlyle quoted for the first time.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed." I think it was *all* said,—all that we ever come to; and that, after all our wondering and puzzling and hard work, we go back and find it there. We invent the bread, and there's the loaf in the closet."

"But it *has* to be so, always," said Corinna, eagerly. "Emerson says, 'No one can find in history what he has not

first found in himself.' Nor in revelation any more, I suppose."

"*That* was all told us too, at the beginning. 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness.' 'If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?' How *can* they think they say these things for the first time?"

"Anyway, it comes back to the same. We must grow to it."

"And we cannot of ourselves add one cubit to our stature. Growing is living."

"Yes, answered Corinna, quoting Emerson again. "'What truth you have, live it, and so have more.'"

"'To him that hath, shall be given and he shall have abundance;' 'Do the will, and ye shall know of the doctrine;' and besides that," went on Hope, warming into self-forgetfulness, and that bright-shining coming into her eyes; — the same word says, 'I that am the Truth, *am* the *Life*. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' Growing is living ; and living is *given*. 'Keep the commandments, and I will manifest myself — I do believe it is all there — and a great deal more. I do not think I am afraid to say that I feel as if I could get along without Emerson.'

"I dare say he would tell you so himself. That it was just what you *must* do."

"I dare say he would. And there is where he stops with his new word, — just where I want help. The other says, 'Come unto me ; abide with me, and I will give you everlasting life.'"

Hope's voice had lowered. Her cheek was crimson with the intensity of her impulse. There was a softer shining in her eyes now, — the shining up to the golden light of the pure spring of her tears ; they only shone, not fell ; she said no more, but presently putting together some little things of ours that were to go upstairs, she took them in her hands and went away.

"She's a good girl," said Aunt Ildy ; "there's a Dealing

with her, I don't doubt. All aint brought in the same way, nor don't have the same evidences."

That was the end of it for then ; the extremes touched ; that which was all charged and quick with thrills and sparkles was neutralized into dead tranquillity.

We were going out that morning. We all went, presently, and put on our things. Corinna had a German lesson, and Harriet wanted to buy crayons ; Mrs. Holgate had people to see, and black silk to match for new sleeves to her second-best gown ; and Aunt Ildy and Hope and I had the inevitable shopping of country visitors to town.

It was the dear, old, mixed-up Washington Street, then, where everything was small and wedged together, and you knew your way by the angles and corners, and nothing stared out at you through great plate glass, but you must know enough to begin with to go in and inquire.

Up on Tremont Row they had some new stores, and the first great, showy dry-goods warehouse was just finished between Franklin and Summer Streets ; but people shook their heads at it as at something more than doubtfully flashy and fast, and old ladies got bewildered in being battledored from counter to counter under the new department system, and bobbed little courtesies, and dodged right and left to let the other bobbing and courtesying old ladies pass, when they came up against their own images in the great mirrors at the back.

Old Mrs. Gregory hadn't done selling caps and ribbons and laces in her mysterious bonnet, nor had Mrs. Peverelly's sign been taken down from the confectionery in the "jog." It is of no use to tell people in general how we bought shoes at Williams's, and carpets at Gulliver's, and threads and needles and Berlin wools in the narrow two stories at Whitney's, and things unattainable elsewhere, at Quincy Tufts'. Boston people, who have lived long enough, remember ; and nobody else understands or cares ; but there was something cosey and self-gratulatory in the shopping of those days, when one found out things and places, and there was a cleverness in doing it ; when a buying was a particular and personal having, because

there were not inexhaustible cases and cargoes of everything to supply a thousand people just alike, and dress and trim them all in uniform, from their hair down.

Hope liked it; it called out her Monday-and-Saturday faculty; she could organize the whole expedition in her head beforehand; when she was with us we seldom had to retrace or double upon our steps; she put us in mind of all we wanted, just when we were where we could do the errands; everything fell out, and fell in, beautifully; it was a kind of blossoming of business; and Aunt Ildy was in her serenest good-humor with us all.

It was wonderful how much Hope saw in the streets; how, brushing against a stranger, she somehow touched not an elbow, but a human life. She had no need to look away back to the old Greeks, this golden-eyed girl, to read deep words and truths of love and beauty; they were nigh to her, about her daily path, offering their gracious text at every hand.

Quickened to notice and compare, by all I saw of the new life — the strain after life — at the Holgates', I recognized this more than ever.

I think, remembering at this after time, that rarely, if ever, was a day passed, or an outgoing made, however simply, in Hope's company, that the time and the going were not crowned and fulfilled, by some happening or perception, some meaning and interest, that were like the harvest of the hour.

We had just got a new cap for Aunt Ildy, and were turning down toward Widdifield's, about her glasses, which was our last business, when before us on the pavement a group of three passed by.

A lady in silk and lace; a child, — a little girl, — with dainty bonnet and delicate kid gloves, and bits of French boots, such as then replaced only occasionally the simple walking-shoes still worn; behind them, keeping eagerly close, almost touching them, yet carefully preserving such angle of position that her following should not be obvious to the lady; (there were sides to bonnets then; I wonder if they have been left off since on the same principle that horses' blinders have, — that we needn't shy at anything?) now and then venturing

a finger, softly, upon the muslin folds of the little one's rose-colored dress ; she herself, this last, in an old, limp, faded calico, wearing down-trodden shoes and much-bedinged stockings ; a sun-scorched bonnet, tied under the chin with ribbon that had ceased to be anything but string ; bare hands, and hair filling up untidily the bent bonnet-brim, and hanging below the crumpled cape ; turning her toes out, and falling, it seemed unconsciously, into a step and air the parody of that before her ; wearing, all the while, a kind of happy dream-look in the eyes, and a smile under the shadow of the shabby straw, that told of some absorption and some satisfying beyond and against the accounting for of appearance.

Hope and I were together ; Aunt Ildy walked a little behind ; Hope was close to the common, shabby, yet not ragged or suffering-looking child ; something lightened in her face answering to the look in the girl's ; it was as if the two were speaking a secret language.

All at once, the mother, holding her daughter's hand, stopped before a window in which hung delicate French prints and lawns. There was one with small purple shamrocks on a white ground ; the little clustered trefoils, with their crossed stems, dropped all over it in a violet shower.

"There, that would do for you, Susie, dear!" And by her sudden stop, and the passing of the contrary current on the narrow walk, we were all held in an instant's pause.

Aunt Ildy, rather indignant, pressed by, and 'moved on first ; Hope caught my hand, and lingered. Amongst us, the calico gown and the rusty bonnet were nearly hidden for the second or two, and in these we heard a little voice, thinking itself covered up and hidden also, that said, softly, as the two passed into the shop :—

"So it will. For Susie, dear,—and me, dear. Just alike. I'll stand outside and look at the folks, ma."

And the little untidy thing stood up on the doorstep, and let us go by.

"Just think of that!" cried Hope. "Don't you see? She's making believe it's her mother, and that she's another, and belongs to them. I know!"

"Poor thing! What's the use?" said I, only pitying the delusion.

"Use!" exclaimed Hope. "It's true — somewhere. There's a mother-love for her somewhere — and a giving — just as much. There's an *inside* world! This only stands for it. And that lady, — and most folks, — for a little more than they know of, that's all."

When we got home, Mrs. Holgate asked us if we had been in at the Athenæum again.

"We didn't have time," said Hope.

"You did all your shopping, I suppose?" Corinna asked, a little satirically.

"All for to-day. Yes."

"I waited for you there, awhile," said Harriet. "I've been nearly all the morning among those casts of the antiques."

"I like the pictures best," said Hope.

Hope was a little bit shocked at standing face to face with the Venuses, and had been half afraid, I think, of the Laocoön.

"You don't understand the antiques," said Mrs. Holgate, forbearingly.

"I don't think I do, ma'am," answered Hope, simply. "At least, I understand some other things easier."

They did keep at it all the time. First one thing and then another: Ethics, æsthetics, metaphysics. What this said, that preached, and the other wrote. Everybody had a tug at the Sphinx. Life was well-nigh ciphered with their deciphering; reduced to hopeless shreds with their anatomizing. Aunt Ildy quoted "Mother Goose": —

"The sow came in with the saddle,
The little pig rocked the cradle ;
The dish jumped up on the table
To see the pot swallow the ladle ;
The spit that stood behind the door
Threw the pudding-stick on the floor.
Oddsplat! said the gridiron. Can't you agree?
I'm the head Constable. Bring 'em to me!"

But where was the head constable? Where was Oedipus?

I, with a disquiet in my own experience that answered to this outward surging, looked on ; watching if any help might come of it to me.

Two days later there was an afternoon reading at the house. Aunt Ildy went upstairs and took a nap. Hope and I got into a corner.

Everybody looked very wise and strong. It was the look beforehand, like the Schiller on the reading-stand. They seemed so certain of what they were coming to ; at least, that they were surely coming to something.

I, doubting so painfully what I *was* coming to, — or if to anything, — questioning so of life, that with me had got into a hard knot at the very outset of the unwinding, — questioned also of all that came in my way ; if haply any sign might direct me right ; if I might catch any loop of hope or clearness, through which my thread might run smooth again into my hand.

I wondered if they brought any word of fate to me, — these seekers ; these repeaters after greater seekers ; these passers-on of telegraphic meanings and solemn watchwords.

I was half vexed with Hope, quietly busy with her netting of a cake-napkin for Aunt Ildy, apparently untouched with any momentousness or expectation ; forgetful that “ such drawing-room was simply a section of infinite space, where so many God-created souls did for the time meet together.” Clothed she was, comfortably ; in her contented every-day life ; in the simple outward that was given her ; in no haste to strip her being down to the mysterious, naked Me of the metaphysics. Clothed, and in her right mind, I wonder, as God meant her to be ? Not denuded, cutting herself with stones, driven by the legion ?

I thought of this afterward ; I think of it now, when I can look back and remember how the Lord held her, then and always, safely and tenderly, at his feet.

I had got hold of “ Sartor Resartus ” since I had been here ; its strong, bold sentences had taken a grasp of me ; I thought I found there things I had not known before.

What signified the shifting relations of neighbor atoms if

we were indeed but atoms in the All? Could I be content with that? Could I be a part of the great shining,—the universal joy? Was this self-losing? The divine end?

Out of some individual restlessness must always come this grasping forth into the vague, this flinging back of life into the impersonal. I think I know better now; that “we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon,” when most “in this tabernacle we do groan, being burdened;” that each living-out of God’s meaning is a piece of his own beauty, and a personal blessedness, laid up for each from the beginning; that so only we give back into his glory; that it was so Jesus gave his flesh,—his mortal living and embodiment,—for the life of the world. That we must wear the raiment he puts upon us, with simple believing, till he changes it for the white robe of an eternal purity and peace.

To-day I was eager, feverish; I laid a mental clutch upon every word; I wanted all at once to come into my inheritance. There are other prodigals than they who demand their patrimony to squander in riotous outward living.

They brought in treasures like the Forty Thieves; each had found something rich or sparkling; there was much reading, much talking over what was read; much rejoicing over great words, Sesames of absolute truth; after all, they went away, leaving me confused and hungry, like one who wakes from a dream of sumptuous food.

I carried the “Tailor Sewed Over” upstairs with me that night. I wanted to make Hope talk about it.

I sat reading while she brushed her long, bright hair. I had just let mine down, and left it so. It was different from hers, as the working of the brain beneath it; capable of catching a gleam in the quick light, but in the shadow dusky, neutral, dun-colored. Hers shone from itself. I pushed my hands up among the fallen locks against my temples, and leaned so over the book.

“It’s just what you say yourself,” I broke out, presently, to Hope, without preface, and without lifting my eyes.

I spoke as if she had disputed something. I felt in my mind, magnetically, the feeling of hers; that she was wistful

of my occupation,—wistful also of a better, fuller help for me. I knew she understood, with her strange intuition, having hardly looked into any philosophy, that no philosophy would answer me.

I read from the page before me:—

“ ‘All visible things are emblems. Matter exists only spiritually, to represent some Idea, and body it forth.’ You’re always saying it, Hope. You say ‘It’s all true, somehow; everything means something; you can’t see what there isn’t; there’s an inside world.’ Why don’t you like this?”

“I don’t know it much; but it seems to *stop*,” said Hope. “It’s the difference between a word in a dictionary, or a sentence in a grammar, and a word spoken by *somebody* right to me. It may be a very beautiful word; the sentence may have the parts of speech all right, ready for parsing; but it’s spelling and parsing, after all; what the words were really meant for was to speak with. I want to be *spoken to*; and so do you, Anstiss. I think they are so busy parsing, that they forget to listen. Their bright thinking makes me feel cold,” she went on after a pause, “and the hard work of it tires me. It is like the fishermen toiling all night and catching nothing, till the Lord came, in the morning, and told them where to cast their nets, and *gave* them what they wanted. I have to come back to this, to get warmed and rested, always.”

And Hope sat down in the chair opposite mine, and took into her hands her Bible from the little book-table.

“Wait a minute,” she began again, as I turned back to my Carlyle. “See how *live* this is, after that. And if it hadn’t been for this, is it likely, I wonder, that that man would ever have got at the other?”

So she read the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John. Those wonderful eighteen verses that are the spiritual epic of creation and redemption.

“God spoke from the beginning; and his speech was Himself. All things are his words and his meanings, and without them was not anything made. In this word of love are the life and the light of men; but it shone in darkness that understood it not. There were men sent to bear witness. John

came. He was not that Light ; he was not all God had to say ; no man is ; he only saw, and interpreted. The true Light lighteth every man. Each may have a little ; may be a letter of the word. Yet the world knew it not. Even his own received him not, knowing it to be He. Therefore came the Word, at last, once for all, in the flesh ; this whole thought of God in and for his world, that was Himself,— in a human life, and dwelt among us ; it touched us with grace and truth ; it translated to us the hidden glory of *the Father*. No man hath seen God at any time ; this only begotten, which is in his own bosom, hath declared him."

That was the fresh, live meaning that ran through the old, worn words, as she read them over ; something of that she made me feel, then, in her feeling of them. It was in her voice, her emphasis, her pauses. The soul of the sublime language was in her eyes, and lightened upon me. But I felt as if I could not have got it for myself.

"Somebody must always help me, Hope," I said ; "you or Emerson, or Carlyle. I must get it where I can."

I thought, as I spoke, of Red Hill, and the interpretation I had waited years for, and that Grandon Cope had given me. Of how he quickened me with his own insight, till I, too, could see ; till I could, also, count the stones in the wall of the New Jerusalem. I had been near beholding the glory, and living in the light of it. I had told Richard, then, as if I knew, how all creation was a "talk." I had been impatient with him because he did not see what I thought I saw. It came back to me now, with a meaning that I had not known myself.

Since, — and such a little since, — the cloud of my life had shut in the shining ; my mistakes had bewildered me, and sent me astray ; I could not distinguish the voices ; pain and reproach assailed me ; there was only a cry in my own heart ; the world about me had grown dumb again.

"I don't believe it comes with much looking for, or with telling back and forth, as some of these people seem to think. It isn't 'with observation.' The Lord himself gives it, 'within us.' "

Up and down the page of the book I held, my eye still ran, mechanically ; and still the words read like great words ; why were they not worth while ? Who knew that they might not have been " given " also ?

" I do not say," said Hope, to my demand of this. " It only seems to me as if they climbed up their own way into the sheepfold, when all the time the Door is open. As if they tried to begin again, and do it themselves. And that is the losing and the hard work."

" See here," I said, hardly noticing her word. " ' If you consider it, what is Man himself, and his whole terrestrial life, but an Emblem ; a clothing, or visible Garment for that divine Me of his, cast hither, like a light-particle, down from heaven? ' "

" Still it is only like parsing. Can he tell us what to do with the Me, when we have found that it is there ? Or what shall ever become of it ? It is the Me that puzzles us."

" Has anybody *un-puzzled* us ? "

" Certain, Anstiss." Tender, and reverent, hurt gently with my assumed doubt, was Hope's utterance of this peculiar word of hers. " ' The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.' He did not leave us to wait for Mr. Carlyle to say that. But we must wait for *Him* to say, ' Yet the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' ' Consider the ravens ; consider the lilies ; how God clothes and feeds them — and you. Ye are not able to do the thing that is least ; why are ye troubled about the rest ? Fear not, little flock ; it is *your Father's* good pleasure to give you the *kingdom !*' "

Carlyle's " All " was not like this. Nor the clothing of his light-particles. Still, neither is chemistry the law of love ; yet these things are analogous ; they help. They had a charm for me, they illustrated ineffable things. I remembered the old thrill of my school-days, when I learned of the interpretation of the gases, and straightway saw its spiritual meaning.

Hope rested me ; reminded and reassured me ; yet I could not see why she could not welcome these things also. They

were so like herself in much ; they put in grander words so many things that she said simply.

I know, now, the difference ; the difference that made her shrink. Out of her simple faith — her receiving the kingdom of heaven as a little child — grew her living thought, the gift of the loving Spirit ; she was afraid of cold thinking that should try to replace faith. She was afraid of anything that seemed to “ find itself out ; ” that could not see how it was “ all there, beforehand,” in the perfect word that teaches all things and saves to the uttermost.

By and by, this “ all and more ” that she kept bringing from the heavenly treasure, laying it in a reverent exultation beside whatever riches of human philosophy were offered her, should come back to me with something of her own glad satisfying ; by and by, long after, when I needed it most ; but now I was eager to prove to her ; to make her acknowledge.

“ He brings it round to just where you do ! ” I cried. “ He says your very words. He proves it out of materialism itself. ‘ What make you of your Nothing can act but where it is ? ’ It is about Red and Blue, — Judge and Criminal. See ! — ‘ Red says to Blue, Be hanged and anatomized. Blue hears with a shudder, and, O wonder of wonders ! marches sorrowfully to the gallows, is there noosed up, and the surgeons dissect him. How is this, or what make you of your Nothing can act but where it is ? Red has no physical hold of Blue ; no clutch of him ; neither are those ministering sheriffs and hangmen and tipstaves so related to commanding Red that he can tug them hither and thither ; but each stands distinct within his own skin. Nevertheless, as it is spoken, so it is done. Thinking reader, the reason seems to me twofold : First, Man is a Spirit, and bound by invisible cords to all men.’ ”

“ Why ! Why ! ” cried Hope, in a kind of breathless fulness ; her face all alive with something that was almost fun, only that her eyes glowed so with her intense enthusiasm, “ what a while he was in coming to it ! The centurion could have helped him long ago ! ‘ I say to this man, Go, and he goeth ; and to another, Come, and he cometh ; and to my

servant, Do this, and he doeth it. Speak the word, Lord, and my servant shall be healed ! ' — They *cannot* go outside what has been given ; it holds the whole. The Lord's life put it all into the world. The kingdom *came* ; and the kings of the earth may ' bring their glory and honor into it ; ' but that is all that they can do. The same things come here and there ; that shows how He has made us all one ; but they are *His* ; He ' gave his flesh — ' his bodily living of all truth — for this life of the world that is in it now. He *said* the flesh was nothing ; the word he spoke was the Spirit and the life. Why *can't* they see how it was all in Him ? They part his raiment, while they crucify him ! Who else says live things, and then tells us, Come unto me, and I will give you more, — all. I am the bread of life that came down from heaven ? "

Hope burned and quickened as she went on ; she spoke the thought as it came to her ; it grew as she spoke it ; it led her whither she had not even seen when she began ; into a great, new gladness. Every clause was an outburst of joy.

She would not have spoken so downstairs, to all those people ; and yet — I don't know ; — if it had come to her then, perhaps she could not even then have helped it.

It seemed to me, sometimes, that Hope Devine was inspired.

After that, we quieted down, and went to bed.

The candle was out ; Hope lay utterly still ; her sweet breath came softly against my cheek with such gentle and regular impulse, that I thought she had already fallen asleep. When, all at once, out of her repose, she spoke once more, — the issue of her musing that had still gone on, after our last words.

" ' Nothing can act but where it is.' It's true — turned round. Nothing can *but* be where it acts. It's *there*, too, with all the rest. It's true when we dream, and when we think, and — when we pray. The angel of the Lord *came* with his messages. — We say ' Our Father who art in heaven,' because when we shut our eyes, we're there. — The Lord could not love his disciples without being ' with them always.' — And that's why the little children's

angels — oh, how beautiful it is, Anstiss, and how much there is of it!"

" You speak so quick and so sure, Hope! And how it all flies together in your mind, from Genesis to Revelation! Did you ever think it all out before?"

" No," said Hope, instantly; " not *so*. I've just — *noticed* it;" and while she hesitated, and then fixed on her quaint, accustom'd word, I knew in the darkness how she smiled, and what the look of vision was upon her face. " But it's true. It's there. I see it — clear."

CHAPTER XX.

ÆSTHETIC TEA.

"VERLOREN! verloren!" cried Harriet Holgate, coming in, and subsiding into the only chair in the place.

We were busy in the pantry, or china closet, a small square room adjoining the back parlor, in one corner of which a table was spread with exquisite fresh linen and silver tea-things.

Corinna was standing on a high stool, reaching down best cups and saucers, and plates of India porcelain from an upper shelf; Hope and I, with fine glass-towels, were receiving and dusting.

"What's lost?" answered Corinna, impatiently. "Your gloves, or your heart, or your wits — besides your time? And why don't you speak English?"

"Because I'm cultivating German, and it's my duty to impress it on my mind by using it on all impressive occasions. Don't be cross, Krin; at least till I say Now! I haven't got through. When I have, we'll all be cross together."

"Are we to wait for you to get it all into German?"

"No, indeed. It would be too full of idiots. You'd better come down, before I fire."

"Fire away," retorted Krin, not a bit aesthetically, or apprehensively; and drawing a pile of precious porcelain into her hands at their utmost reach, as if in defiance.

"Well, then, the big man isn't coming. That's one verloren. And the other is, — it's more than half of no use if he did. He's engaged to be married; up there in the country. The Growe girls' have just told me. Now!"

Corinna gave me the plates, cautiously, and then dropped deliberately and gradually down, and sat upon the stool.

"Well — that's nice!"

She put her feet upon a rung, and her elbows on her knees, and her chin into her hands; and looked down at us with her cheeks wrinkled up under her eyes.

"*Why* can't he come? The rest of it's rubbish, you know. After to-night, who cares? But what is he spoiling our tea for?"

"Don't know. The Upfolds counted on his staying, for our tea, and for the class to-morrow. But he's gone; and -- what's the transcendental for an upset apple cart, or — fat in the fire?"

Harriet looked so pretty, and so funny, and spoke in such sudden small type, that the words failed of their vulgarity.

"On the whole, I believe I'm rather afraid of him," said Corinna, with resignation. "He'd have found out everything one isn't up to — yet."

"On the whole, the grapes are sour," responded Harriet.

"Girls, girls! What are you sitting round doing nothing for? What's the matter? Isn't that china dusted yet?"

"Mother!" cried Corinna, "what do you think? The Upfolds' friend — that Mr. Cope, the "North American Review" man — isn't coming. He's gone."

The last plate, that I was just placing on the pile, did *not* drop, as things do in story-books, when people are taken by surprise. On the contrary, my fingers contracted themselves so tightly upon it, that they might almost have pinched a piece out.

It had been so near as this! What should I have done?

I just stood there, holding the plate.

"I haven't had time to read his piece," said Mrs. Holgate, with an echo of her daughter's submission. The girls could not break her of all her old-fashioned words. She never remembered to say "article."

"But, there! I can't let my cake burn if he isn't. I came for a straw from that new broom. Pull me one out, Harriet. A couple."

"Mother doesn't care two straws," said Harriet, indolently, handing them across.

"Straws show which way the wind blows. Right through

the cooking range, to-day. No draught anywhere else," said Corinna, laughing.

"Cake is cake," said Mrs. Holgate.

"I don't believe it is," said Hope, merrily. "I guess it's only an Idea, suggested by particles of sugar and starch—and sulphur, and the rest of the egg and butter chemicals."

Mrs. Holgate took the straws, and hurried away with them, downstairs.

She was suffering a lamentable relapse into housewifery and commonplace. All her pre-Carlylean instincts were aroused in her by the demand upon her purely practical skill, which was also her natural delight. She and Aunt Ildy were kitchened together all the forenoon, over wonderful preparations of muffins and lemon pound-cake. They only had two things, at these teas, beside the tea; but those two things, here, were to be things in their way such as High Culture had never elsewhere put her lips to.

The gods do not despise ambrosia; only, they eat it in a divine abstraction.

I remember, amid all the other remembrances of that evening, how fast the tender muffins ceased to be, and how the melting richness of the lemon cake was dissolved away.

I have no recollection of how that plate ever got out of my hand. I think Hope must have taken it. She always did, quietly, what other people had not the sense to do for themselves.

When the dinner was over, and the last touches were given to the rooms below, we went upstairs to rest a while, and then to dress. Aunt Ildy was to have her usual nap. Hope and I took books, and lay down on bed and sofa, in our room. Now and then we spoke, but did not sleep.

I was thinking of those things downstairs. How much was true and how much was put on?

We do not live in fairy-land, to be sure; things will not do themselves; life *doesn't* literally flower, nor being blossom; there are processes.

It takes all day if you are going to have a tea, as the Hol-

gates had it ; somebody's all day ; your servants', if you are rich enough ; otherwise, your own.

When the time comes, then it all blooms ; then friends come graciously and easily in, upon your grace and ease, and your life is at its perfect and harmonious point ; the aspect stands for what always is ; the tone of the moment for that which runs through the days.

Nobody knows about the broom-straws, when the golden-delicate cake comes round ; nobody thinks of the special china dusting ; nobody asks any more, if that page has been really just now read, at which Jean Paul, replacing Schiller, lies open on the reading-stand, pushed carelessly into a secluded corner. Nobody knows that the prints from Michael Angelo were borrowed by Harriet this morning ; that though she will keep, and thoroughly enjoy them, for days to come, it had been a special object to have them here to-night, and as yet they have been barely looked at.

Many things are every-day and everywhere, now, like silver forks, that did not use to be ; but there is a time, with all refinements, before every-day ; a time of representatives and occasions.

The portfolio was on the pier-table ; the freshest music was scattered on the open piano ; the new reviews had had their leaves carefully cut,—that was the last thing Mrs. Holgate did, when she was too tired to do anything else, before she changed her morning-gown ; Aunt Ildy looking on with her severely practical nose very much in the air. All had been “seen to,” as sedulously as the tea furnishings on the cool, white-draped table, the fresh flowers in the vases, and the polishing of the needless fire-irons.

It expressed their tastes, or it could not have been there ; it told truly of the occupations and the culture they chose and aimed at ; it was so far honest ; but it was just as much a “setting out” as the rural dame's whose whole glory is in her bountiful cheer,—her seven kinds of unapproachable cake, and four of miraculous preserves.

What did it amount to, beyond the setting-out and the clearing up ?

The talk, the ideas, would be just the same ; a bringing forth of best things for company. Would the best things be any better, or more, for that ? Might not something get hopelessly soiled, or shattered even, as the precious porcelains and silken garments do, now and again ?

What did anything amount to ; the honestest and simplest living ; the doing of daily tasks for duty's sake ? Only a living ; making up one's bed to tumble again ; cooking, to eat and be hungry, and cook again ; wanting, getting, losing ; beginning over and over ; do we really get on at all ?

"Do you like your life, Hope?" I asked, suddenly.

"I'm *interested* in it," said Hope. "I'd rather finish it than begin any other."

"As if it were a book to be read!"

"Certain ; just as if ; but not only ; you asked *as if*, Anstiss."

"But a book," I answered, "you *know*, is all between the covers ; something must come of it before you get through."

"Certain," she said again ; "people couldn't make the books so, if the real thing wasn't ; it *is* all between the covers."

"Perhaps ; but the all of some books isn't much worth while. You wait, and wait, and expect, and finally it shuts up and hasn't told anything. It's hard work to read some books, Hope."

"Never mind the books, then, any more. I dare say some aint made right ; but the real thing is, you see ; talk about that. Don't you often, when you are watching and hoping for anything, take a kind of clear comfort the longer you wait? Because then it seems as if it must come soon."

"H-m ! I don't know ! I think it makes my throat feel dusty."

"And then water is so good to drink. That's like what Mrs. Whistler used to say. She used to know when good things were coming. Her mouth was made up for them so."

"We may make up our mouths all our lives long, I guess, for some things ; and go out of the world with them made up."

"Certain."

"What do you keep saying 'certain' for, Hope?" I asked, crossly. "That's three times."

"Is it? Well, it's true, every time." Hope laughed, with absolute good-humor. "And nothing's certainer than the last one. I think this world is, *just*, for us to make up our mouths in. And after that, comes the blessedness,—for those that have found out what to hunger and thirst for."

It was a very pleasant tea-drinking, indeed.

We were now in early September. The evenings were softly cool. Of those who had left their city homes a while, for the fields or the sea-beach, many had returned. Up and down the street in which the Holgates lived were bits of gardens at the backs of all the houses, and balconies ran along the drawing-room stories, upon which long windows were thrown open, and there people came out to sit under the little patch of starlit heaven that darkled and shone above from roof to roof across between these and the other opposite blocks whose gardens ran down to the same paved lane.

There were vines, lifting their great, green, clustering leaves and tossing their light tendrils in the evening wind; there were deep horse-chestnut trees rearing their billows of verdure, and there was the smell of many flowers. A suggestion of the country; an outbreathing of the same sweet grace from the true-hearted earth, unspoiled beneath the crush and burden of a city, that the wide fields gave out of their unsmothered life.

Inside, the rooms were bright; pouring their light out through muslin draperies into the vines and tree-tops. There was the fragrance of delicious tea, that somehow is especially fragrant in summer warmth, and coming forth in little whiffs upon sweet outer air.

People took this little evening comfort in the city then; and there was a gentle, social feeling of the rest and refreshing at the day's end, and everybody's bits of green and blossom helped everybody's else, and the bright, open windows were like pleasant watchfires telegraphing back and forth from household to household. Now, from May to November there are long ranges of closed shutters and cobwebbed railings; the

gardens are only disused clothes-yards, and strange cats walk about the balconies in the darkness.

I liked this glimpse of city life with its country flavor. There was something delicate in it that you get in anything homœopathically taken, which, quaffed freely, loses some mysterious power or charm. It was like a sip of rare wine.

Hope and I sat outside ; the Miss Growes came, too, and a young Mr. Upfold who accompanied his sisters to these gatherings, taking the sociality without the metaphysics.

"They always *did* like the crust of the biscuit best, and I couldn't bear it ; so they gave me all the soft," said he. "It's my perquisite."

He made us very comfortable with a tea-poy, and went to and fro, bringing fresh-filled cups, sugar, cream, and cakes.

"How still it is !" said Hope ; "almost like Broadfields ; and yet, what houses and houses full of people, crowded together ! I think it is a strange feeling to live in a great city. All walls, and walls ; built to shut up lives. Nobody knows what is close by. It makes me think —" Hope stopped.

"Well, Miss Devine, of what does it make you think?" asked young Upfold. He had just brought her the sugar-bowl, and Hope had forgotten she wanted it.

"Are *you* going to have thoughts, too? It is a terrible way people have got into lately ; it reminds me, sometimes, of my little niece asking about her soul. She had a notion it was a kind of an oval-shaped thing, lying across inside her bosom ; and she wondered what it would walk about on when it got to heaven. I think we are all getting to be pure ideas, and the wonder is what we shall walk about on ; or if we do, how we shall look? That was what puzzled Rosie ; she thought legs would be so funny. But I should really like to know what you thought of ; you look as if it were something that came ; not a bullet that you had run carefully beforehand, and were waiting for a chance to fire off. They all carry such lots of ammunition, Miss Hope!"

"I don't," said Hope, laughing. "Not a single cartridge. And I shouldn't know how to load and fire, if I did."

"'It made you think,' — I do hope you'll tell me!"

I dare say Mr. Upfold fancied he had struck a vein that would last awhile ; that he was fairly started on a half-hour's bantering small-talk, such as most girls would have been ready for, and made much of ; a beseeching and withholding of something just enough, or little enough, worth while to serve the pretence ; as children play "button, button."

I think he was very much surprised when Hope lifted up her golden-brown eyes upon him, the smile subduing softly on her face, and said simply :—

"It made me think — of the many mansions."

"I believe it did," he answered at once, quietly, and with a deference ; paying tribute, in words as simple as her own, to her reality. "Will you tell me how?"

"So near," she said ; "and yet we knew so little. But it is a comfort they are there ; and we can see the light."

"Do you always think such things as that?"

"I think a great many little beginnings. So does everybody, I suppose. Everything is like something else, and puts us in mind, you know."

"I am afraid you ought to think of your cup of tea, just now ; or will you let me get a hot one? And you haven't had a bit of cake, — have you?"

He spoke as if he would like to do a little service for her. Perhaps something so like angelhood gleamed out upon him, that he would like to bring her food and drink, and prove her mortal.

"Oh, no, indeed!" said Hope. "I mean — the tea — it is quite nice. But I *would* like a little more cake, presently, if you please."

I wondered at Hope's charming little easy way. She had never been in a company like this ; yet she was so at home! But I need not have wondered. She was too simple to be anything but easy. "Such drawing-room" was "simply a section of infinite space," after all ; and in no essential way different to her from Mrs. Hathaway's best parlor, or the fern-pastures about Red Hill.

After we had done drinking tea and eating cakes, we stood about, and just within, the windows, looking at the company,

and catching, from the nearer groups, the tone of conversation. The Miss Growes went to the table to look at the prints. Harriet was turning them over, and talking rather learnedly about them.

Mr. Upfold asked us if we would like to see.

"I don't know anything at all about them," answered Hope; "and I don't believe I should find out enough to enjoy them, looking at them in this way. I should like to have them all by myself, or with somebody who could explain them. I shall try and ask Miss Harriet to-morrow; for I *should* like to understand."

"I wonder if there is another girl in this room, that would give an honest answer like that!" exclaimed Mr. Upfold.

"Oh, they all know; or have had some chance to know," said Hope. "I never saw anything of the kind before; and I haven't read about Michael Angelo. But I mean to, now. Everything doesn't come all at once, to anybody."

It was funny to watch young Upfold's face. Every time Hope opened her lips, she said something which called out that mingled expression, through slightly lifted brows, mouth playing with half-checked smiles, and bright, quick flashes from the eyes, which told of surprise, amused appreciation of her exquisite freshness, and an unfeigned pleasure and admiration.

Once he turned round to me.

"I wish I could get her out there in the middle of the room among them all, and make her talk," said he. "It would startle them like a little sun-shower."

"It would be like the little child set in the midst," said I.

"Tell me honestly. Don't you think they pretend awfully?"

"Your sisters! Our hostesses! All their friends!"

"Well, you *can't* say, to be sure. But I should like to get at what she makes out of it.—Miss Devine! what do you think of all this fine talk? Do you believe they've got so far as to '*think French*'? Do you suppose they breathe transcendently? Or is it all practice and best gowns?"

Hope glanced about upon the groups, with not a bit either

of presumptuous judgment or sarcasm, any more than of timid over-impression, in her manner.

"I suppose it is all real," she said; "or they would not take the trouble. But—I don't know—it seems,—doesn't it—a little bit—as if they were looking in the glass all the time? Like trying on things,—some of it?"

Mr. Upfold's laugh broke suddenly upon the low, uniform key of conversation around the room, and heads were turned toward us.

He wheeled slightly and easily, giving his back to the company, and his merry face to us.

"Capital!" said he, with a subdued emphasis. "New phraseology,—a too 'objective subjectivity.' I haven't got to thinking in it yet, Miss Devine; mais je le parle assez pour ne me faire comprendre."

"Thank you, Mr. Upfold," replied Hope, demurely.
"Which is the French?"

He laughed out again.

"Don't, Miss Hope!" he cried. "They'll find you out and get you away. The forty she-bears will come out of the wood and carry off the two naughty children. I want to be naughty and happy a little while longer."

—"After all, Mrs. Holgate! I and my lion! Quite tame and amenable!"

"Amenable to good fortune, Mrs. Holgate. I was detained in town this morning, and this afternoon a letter came, which did away with the necessity for my leaving, and in fact, obliged me to remain. My friend, whom it was needful for me to see, will himself be in the city to-morrow."

These last sentences, in two voices, came to me distinctly across what Hope and Mr. Upfold were saying at the same moment. They were spoken beyond the folding-doors, at the entrance to the further parlor, near which Mrs. Holgate stood.

Grandon Cope and the eldest Miss Upfold had just come in together.

There was a buzz in my head then, for a second, and the room and all I saw in it gave a queer little jerk across my eyes, and while it cleared and straightened again as instantly,

I saw that Mr. Cope had gone across the front parlor, right up to Aunt Ildy. She, with a very great amazement in her face, was making, as to the rest of her, a deliberate, complete, old-fashioned, New Oxford courtesy.

The groups broke up, with the interruption and the fresh attraction. People waited to be introduced. Mrs. Holgate fidgeted a little at his occupation with Aunt Ildy. He seemed, indeed, in no manner of hurry; but went on asking, apparently, a great many little questions, which Miss Chism replied to with her properest manner, somewhat stiff and unused, her chin drawn back with a decorous dignity; smoothing carefully, as she spoke, the fingers of her right glove with those of her left hand, in which she held, exactly by the middle, her best pocket-handkerchief. She never looked at me.

Presently, Corinna Holgate came and took Mr. Upfold away. Another gentleman—old Mr. Growe—joined them as they paused by a table in the front room near where Aunt Ildy stood, on which was a tall, slender-stemmed vase of clear glass, holding a single lily-like blossom of some rare plant. They stood, admiring the flower for a minute, and then Corinna dexterously turned and introduced both her companions to Miss Chism.

It made Aunt Ildy quite pre-eminent for the time being. Mr. Cope did not immediately come away; and she stood surrounded, like any young, brilliant woman, with the best masculine attention of the room. It had its effect, as a single such moment will have with a woman who only gets a moment of it, let her age be what it way. I detected the pleased “objective” in her; in her sober, old-fashioned properness, with a decided access of best behavior, she was trying it on.

She alluded to it afterward. It was the point for her approval, in an evening in which she had found much to despise.

“It was very pretty and attentive of Corinna; and Mr. Cope was particularly polite. You can always tell a gentleman by his manners to elderly ladies.”

From Aunt Ildy, he came at once to me. She had been obliged, I know, to reply in the affirmative to his inquiry if I

were with her, though she carefully refrained from any glance in my direction; much as children do, when they are playing at "hide a thing," and are telling "how high water."

There was only time for a mere greeting; only time for the room to give that odd jerk again before my vision as he approached, and then for me to answer properly and quietly his salutation, and to put my hand in his for an instant as he offered it; for him to say he had had no idea that it was here we were staying,—that it was a great surprise to meet us; to tell him "Yes,—I liked Boston very much indeed;" that "it was not quite certain yet how soon we should return to New Oxford;" to ask, rather suddenly, "if Miss Hare were well, and the family at South Side;" and then they came and got him away.

They divided him round; introducing him to one and another; everybody expected something wonderful from him; and almost everybody, I suppose, was ready with something as nearly wonderful as possible to say to him.

But the wonderful thing he did was to stick loyally to commonplace; he seemed determined not to be deep or grand; he broke up all congested talk; he stirred the company to simple, genial circulation.

He told funny things; he talked railroads with old Mr. Growe, and just when that was getting to be long and monopolizing, he broke it off, and made him laugh most untranscendentally and unspeculatively, at a story of a countryman, unweaned from stage-travelling, beside whom he had been seated in the train, coming down, and who, after many extraordinary private inquiries of himself, had lifted up his voice suddenly, and hailed the conductor at the farther end of the car with, "I say, driver! look here! where does this — team — dine?"

"There is nobody," remarked Grandon Cope, "more intensely green than a Yankee, when things *are* new; precisely because his faculties all waken so alertly to a surprise; therefore, also, he accustoms himself with a corresponding quickness to the new conditions; they are old to him, when the first jerk is over; next week that man will be putting to prac-

tical advantage the facility he has just fairly realized ; next year he will be planting crops and raising stock with reference to the railroad market ; and in five years he will be one of a corporation, perhaps, petitioning for new charters, and buying lands along the routes. Nothing throws the Yankee really off his balance. If the earth's axis were to shift suddenly, he would suffer the convulsion with a certain cat-like, wide-awake-and-watchful spread of every astonished capacity, all abroad for the transition interval, but coming down on his feet, and 'located' in the best prospective latitude before the earthquakes were well over."

Presently after, getting away from Mr. Growe, and leaving the laugh yet broad upon his face, he was noticing with admiration a bouquet of brilliant flowers, in which the vivid coloring of autumn was mingled with the lingering delicateness of summer hues, and asking Harriet Holgate if she had ever seen a piano kaleidoscope. Then all the carefully scattered music was hastily slid together, and dropped into the canterbury ; the lid was raised, the lamp placed, and he showed us the effect,—wreaths, crowns, stars, masses, shifting and glowing in marvellous reflection, from the vase of bright blossoms, as he held it, and moved it slightly and gently in the full intensity of the light.

It was while they were still busy with this, that, resigning the flowers to Mr. Upfold, he went first to the other end of the instrument and took his own turn of observation, and then moved quietly round and came over again to Hope and me.

"Have you got all your questions answered, Miss Anstiss?" he asked. "Have they solved everything?"

"Here!"

"Why, isn't this the place? I thought Boston was the Key, at the end of the book of the generations, where all the riddles were unravelled."

"Into new conundrums?"

I answered him in his own way ; but why did he take that way with me?

Did he not know? Had not Augusta told him? Was there not a displeasure in his heart as there was a self-reproach in

mine? What was the use of talking outside the truth that was between us? Why did he not rather keep away?

While I stood before him, with my face down, knowing his bent upon me, thinking these things,—showing them, perhaps,—his face changed; I saw it when I lifted up my eyes again at his next words, that were different also.

“Yes. You will find out that.”

“That it is all puzzle, and that there is no way out?”

“No. But that theory and introspection will not help you out. It is only living that unravels.”

“Hope would say,—the door isn’t through the looking-glass.”

“Hope would say quite true,” he answered, with a smile, and a quick glance at her that had a question in it. “You would only shatter your ideal, and wound yourself. But how came you, Miss Hope, to say that, and what—if you please—is the rest of it?”

“Mr. Upfold said it was objective subjectivity,” said Hope, mischievously.

“Hope thought,” said I, “that people were trying on their ideas.”

“Precisely,” said Grandon Cope. “They mean nothing false; they are eager after the true—the beautiful; but they think they can lay hold of it abstractly; they forget that it must grow out of them,—that it cannot be gathered, or borrowed, or put on; they forget the lilies of the field, and how they only grow, and God takes care of the glory.”

“The older the world gets,” he continued, “I think the more it does try on; and the less real, simple, first-hand living there comes to be. There is too long a story behind. Almost everything seems to have been done. Somebody thinks a great thought; it comes through years and distances, or out of a different life, to other somebodies; and they, seeing it is something, fancy they can straightway jump into just such thinking, and how fine that will be! Or, out of peculiar condition and character, time and temperament, grows some peculiar social brilliancy; and at once you see, as soon as they hear of it, bright Yankee women flinging up their own

later speciality and opportunity, which the world has come to and waits for, and turning themselves into Madame Recamiers, and their home-y back parlors into French salons. We are in danger of trying on our very patriotism. We are so full of the Declaration of Independence and the battle of Bunker Hill, that if some new national emergency were to arise, I think the first effect would have more or less of the looking-glass about it. If the occasion were real, the real thing would come, and it would be at the bottom all the while ; but the first popular apprehension would be a good deal of the new, grand attitude, — the magnificence of being forefathers ; and our *first* battle might *not* be a Bunker Hill."

"Living is as great a puzzle as thinking," said I, going back to his first word, which weighed with me. "And gets as easily snarled up. And one snarl drives you back into the other."

"You mustn't try to see through the whole skein, or to straighten it all-out into a single thread before you begin to wind ; that makes a snarl, always. There is always an end, and that is what you have got to take hold of. If we each did that, and followed it simply, we should by and by see round, perfect lives, ready for God's tapestry of the future, instead of all the world's yarn thrown confusedly into a heap, and everybody tossing and twitching at it; — pulling it into hard knots in the attempt at brilliant, comprehensive ingenuities, or by way of showing how much farther one could see into the tangle than another."

"But if one gets hold of the wrong end at the first?"

"Still it would unwind with patience. There would be loops to go through, and twists to reverse, and it might not be easy or pleasant. But there always comes some smooth running to every skein, before all is done."

"Would you give up the ideal, and the thinkers, then?"

"No. Not any more than I would give up the astronomers, and the grand glimpses of the Cosmos. But they must not be in a hurry ; they must remember that they are only small observers ; that it is the living that unravels. They can't stand at any one point in time or in development, and

think out the whole eternal fact and drift of being, any more than from a single attitude in time and space of the great heaven, we can read all the tremendous mysteries of its circles and motions. It has got to be *lived out*, in God's leisure and man's obedience, as the story of the æons is told, little by little, in the slow shifting of the stars."

"Are you having it all to yourselves in this corner?"

Mrs. Holgate fidgeted up to us, catching some of the last words,—“æons,” I think, startled her especially,—and seeing Grandon Cope's face alight with eloquence, and Hope's with listening.

“What are you three about? What is Mr. Cope saying? I am afraid the rest of us are losing a great deal.”

Mr. Cope was like the tea and muffins; he was to be handed round; the family should have been helped last; Hope and I, as partly at home, should not have taken so much of the best things to ourselves.

“Don't take me away,” said Grandon Cope, changing his manner humorously. “I couldn't do it again; indeed, I didn't mean to do it at all.”

A hostess should never make ineffectual movements among her guests; there come awkward moments, so, as to an inexpert actor, “*de trop*” upon the stage, and with no resource of by-play.

Mrs. Holgate stood irresolute for an instant, and then moved on to ask Miss Upfold to sing.

During the stir of finding music, and restoring the piano to order, Grandon Cope fell back upon my other side, away from Hope, and while the prelude was playing, he spoke to me again, in a low voice.

“Don't go through false loops, by any means; nor yet be in a hurry to break your thread and make new ends. Be true, and you will be sure; and you will neither tangle your own skein nor any other. Are you going home soon?”

“I suppose so; before very long; I think we must,” I answered, in a hurried, difficult voice. I felt the quick, conscious flush leap up into my face, and burn there as if it never

meant to go away ; and there was a pulse in my throat that choked and pained me.

They *had* talked it all over, then ; and I had gained nothing by coming away ; it was all waiting for me.

" Augusta wants you ; she has plans to tell you of, in which you are included."

I don't know what he thought of me ; of course I understood ; it was the wedding that was to be soon,— perhaps at once ; and I had not a word of friendship or congratulation ; not even a smile ready for such news ; my blushes were all used up upon myself ; I was only full of distress and perplexity ; I was almost angry with worry.

The singing began, and we could not talk any more.

Afterward, when the company broke up, and he was taking leave, he came to me and said good-night, very kindly. He meant that I should not be frightened, or troubled ; it was the purpose of his whole manner. I saw it, and it troubled me the more. Yet I was glad that he did come and say good-night.

The next morning, at breakfast, they talked over the party, as to whether it had been a success. Evidently, they were not quite satisfied.

" I was disappointed in Mr. Cope," said Mrs. Holgate. " He seemed to break everything up. He wouldn't really talk at all."

" He wouldn't be shown off, that's all," said Corinna. " If Mary Upfold hadn't said ' I and my lion,' I believe he would have behaved better."

" It turned into just a common sort of good time, at last," said Harriet. " But I don't know that I didn't rather like it."

" Why, my gracious ! " said Aunt Ildy. " What else would you have ? What *are* parties for ? "

" I think social intercourse, among cultivated people, ought to be something better. Something more, *at any rate*," replied Corinna.

" And suppose they *aint* all so terribly cultivated ? "

" We have a right to expect it," said Corinna, magnificently. " If one takes the trouble with one's self, one has a

right to demand the like culture in others. Otherwise, they are hardly worth while in any way."

"Highty-tighty!" exclaimed Aunt Ildy, pushing back her chair. "It's the same old Satan, after all!"

They were very good-humored, and they laughed at this.

"I'll tell you one thing," resumed Aunt Ildy, not unstimulated with her own success. "I think you make a great deal too free with solemn things. You talk about souls as if they were beans; and you bring the Lord's name in as pat and common as the day of the week; and you undertake to tell what is grand and good and everlasting, as if you had just come down from Mount Sinai; when, all the time, you are just piling up your own human conceits, as the children of Israel did their ornaments, to make a golden calf of. There!"

"But—Miss Chism! Shouldn't we share our life, and help each other with our best? Would you shut out religion from common talk, and only save it up for prayer-meetings and Sundays? Can't you say 'God,' except when the church-bells ring? Isn't everything religion? Isn't poetry truth, and art worship?"

"Don't talk lingo to me. I believe in the Bible, and going to meeting. And that people's souls are something live and awful, that they've got to save. I don't believe you'll save 'em this way!—What are *you* thinking of, Hope Devine?"

Hope's face was earnest; her eyes intense; she listened with an anxiety; her brows dropped gently, as with some immediate awe that the others knew not of.

"I was thinking," she said, "that perhaps we shouldn't any of us dare to say so much about these things, if we remembered that we couldn't talk behind God's back!"

"I shall go, girls, the first of the week," Aunt Ildy said to us, that afternoon, upstairs. "I'm getting tired. Jane Holgate is a good soul; but she's a hypocrite. What she really cared for was the muffins, and that splendid cake. Why can't she be contented to take comfort in 'em, in the plain old way? And why can't folks eat 'em and praise 'em, and ask for receipts? It was better than this!"

On Monday we had letters, from Uncle Royle and Lucretia. Everything was going on well. Lucretia had preserved the peaches, and there was "nothing particular to do now, till the cider apple-sauce, and the barberries, and the pig-killing."

Aunt Ildy was a little mysterious for a day or two, and behaved as if she suspected us of trying continually to find her out, and of supposing that it was likely to be very much worth our while if we could.

Then, all at once, while we were beginning to pack up, she pinched it out to us, like a dole of something that it was rather extravagant to let us have at all, and that we mustn't ever expect any more of.

"I've made up my mind to go down to Duxbury, and see Whitcher Chism's folks. They wouldn't like it, if I came to Boston and didn't. And they think a sight of their Duxbury claims."

"Did you ever see the sea, Hope?" I asked, breathlessly eager, as soon as we were alone.

"Only once," said Hope. "A great many years ago. And that was where it came into the dock."

So we two girls went away with Aunt Ildy to see the sea. How good she was to me! I was just beginning to find her out.

She did her best by me. Years ago, she knew it was good for me to be kept strict, and to learn to darn stockings. Now, with a more kindly and delicate perception, she knew that the great sea, which I had never seen, would be good for me. Better than to go back, now, to New Oxford and South Side.

The great trouble with Aunt Ildy, in her management of my childhood, had been her belief in human depravity. To do her justice, the nearer the human nature was to herself, the more fearful she was for its salvation. She was hard, watchful, irritating; always picking after the sliver of original sin.

"I told you so," said Hope. "I told you how good she would be."

CHAPTER XX.

THE SILENT SIDE.

WINTER CHICKENS.

RICHARD HATHAWAY came up, bareheaded, through the field-path from the cider-mill. He carried his hat carefully in his hand. He went in at the lower end of the long range of shed-building that, trim, neat, and comfortable, its open arches crammed with good oak and chestnut sticks, showing their ends in a close, even wall, helped to give the well-provided look that all these outer surroundings do give to a prosperous New England farm-house. "Solid comfort"—a New England phrase—was well expressed and foretold by its abundant store.

At this lower end, where Richard entered, was the tool-room, floored and windowed; a long ladder was set up against the firm-built woodpile on that side where its extremity, held in by a few upright joists, formed the fourth wall, and shut it in warm from the open shed through all the winter, until the gradual demolition of the great fuel-heap broke into it late in the spring, and let in free and pleasant airs.

Richard went up the ladder, hat in hand. The deep gurgling cluck of a brooding hen greeted him from the dark angle of the roof, in the small space left by the compact logs.

"Well, old biddy! So you're determined? What do you want with winter chickens, I wonder, old biddy? What would you have done without a little help, old biddy? How could you have got along without the hay? There,—there's an egg, biddy! And there's another, biddy! There, and there, and there; lots of eggs, biddy! How do you suppose you'll

get your chickens down from the woodpile? Hadn't thought of that, old biddy, had you? Now, biddy, go to work!"

The old hen nestled and clucked, half disturbed, and half grateful, as Richard tucked, one by one, talking to her all the time, fourteen warm white eggs under her ample feathers. There was an excellent understanding between the two. From his great oxen down to the smallest chicken or the shyest kitten, there was this understanding — of help and kindness, of some intuitive sympathy with their fragment of the common life on his part, and of recognition and gratitude on theirs — between him and all his creatures. The bees would light upon him, and let him handle them; only kind, pure hearts, in clean, healthful bodies, can win, they say, this influence with the busy, wise, hot-tempered little things.

When he had made his old brown biddy comfortable, Richard Hathaway came down. He put his hat on his head again, and sat down for a few minutes on a plough-beam that lay against the wall beneath the window.

He sat there very quietly, thinking. He took up a piece of chalk that lay upon the window-ledge and made idle marks with it.

"Winter chickens!" he was thinking to himself. "Some comforts come late. The old biddy's in the right of it, though. She'll be better off than not to have had 'em at all. — I wonder what kind of winter comforts, if any, will ever come to me? I'm thirty years old. — I don't think I've stopped to count the years before, since I was twenty. Human beings don't make a ring every year, as trees do. I've only made one ring in my life since then. — I've been waiting all these years, for that one hope; and I never thought how long I *was* waiting, before. I never knew till lately what it would be to have it come to nothing, and what a slice of my life would be taken out and gone. — I don't suppose I'm different from other people. Perhaps in ten years more I shall have got over it. And then I shall be forty. — I wonder what she'll do, and come to, in ten years? — I've got my mother, dear soul! And she's sixty-eight. She's hearty. Ten years? — Lord! let her live ten years, till I've overlived this trouble!"

If he had seen it all written down,—his thought and his prayer,—he might, perhaps, have hardly known it again. But it was there; Heaven read it all. Ah, how many prayers Heaven does read, and, seemingly, flings by unanswered!

Richard Hathaway got up and went into the house, to see if his mother had oven-wood enough for her baking, and whether she wanted anything from the store at the Corner.

He put his arm across her shoulders, as he came and stood by her at her pie-board, and looked in her face with something that he wist not of giving itself straight from his good soul to hers.

“Don’t work too hard, mother,” he said.

And then he went down to the barn, and harnessed old Putterkoo, and drove away.

Not from his thoughts; he perceived that. “How a thing follows a man on!” he said to himself. “Like the moon; that goes miles and miles with you, always looking right over your shoulder just the same.”

Day by day, through toil and rest, it went with him, always the same; the same love, the same pain, the same patience; the same thought of her, and the wonder what the time was doing for her.

“They must come back pretty soon, I shold think,” he said. “They’ve been gone a good while. Miss Chism can’t leave the old gentleman much longer; and mother’ll want Hope. Mother sets store by Hope; she’s a good girl; I wish she’d been my real sister. Somebody’ll be coming for her, by and by, like as not; if anything should happen to mother—Gee up, old Putterkoo! Somehow, I don’t like leaving her much, now Hope is away.”

He brought her back a new butter-print,—a bunch of daisies; and he bethought to choose a great, beautiful, cream color and white cake-bowl with a wide lip, to replace the one that Martha broke the other day; and he put a paper of large white peppermints in his pocket for her. He liked so much to bring in unexpected parcels for her, and to give them to her one by one. To give her some last little one, at the end, just when she thought she had got them all.

He found her in the little east-room when he came home and went in there, with his arms full of his packages. There was a pleasant smell of good things just baked ; her morning labor was finished, and she had taken up her knitting-work for the few minutes before Martha would come in with the dinner. The white cloth was laid, and the two blue china plates, and the bright tumblers of clear, old-fashioned glass with their needle-like crimpings around the edge and base, and the shining old silver spoons, and the round salt-cellars that matched the tumblers, and the little tray with sugar-bowl and cream-pitcher, and two shallow, delicate, gold-rimmed cups ; for Mrs. Hathaway liked her cup of tea with her dinner, and liked it always in a dainty way. A few sticks were burning with a slow pleasantness on the glittering little brass firedogs, for the early October day had been somewhat keen, except out in the broad sunlight ; and the cat — (cats always find the clean and cheery places ; they know when a room is just swept and dusted and ready to be comfortable in, as well as anybody) — was curled up on the rug. This is the reason, doubtless, why a cat is so associated with and suggestive of domestic cosiness ; she is rarely part of any but a quiet and orderly picture ; you won't find puss establishing herself willingly in a dirty, confused kitchen ; she will walk through a-tiptoe, with her shoulders up, seeking rest and finding none.

"It's real nice to find you here, mother," said Richard, as he put his parcels down and came over to her, the freshness of comfort touching him, in the place made just so fresh with comfort every day.

"Why, where should you find me, son? Aint I always here at dinner-time?"

"Yes ; that's it ; it's *always* nice. It's the *always* that makes it."

"Richie, — I can't be here always, you know."

"Mother, don't say that, — to-day!"

"Why to-day?"

"Because I've been thinking all day, somehow, how I could never get along without you."

"I wouldn't say it at all, Richie, only I can't help thinking

that when the time comes,—in a long while, perhaps, but who can tell?—I couldn't bear to leave you alone. And we might have happy days together beforehand; you—and she—and I. You ought to have a good wife before many years more, Richie, and be all settled down. I don't have half stockings enough to knit either; and I'm tired of gray yarn," she added, playfully. "I should like to make some soft little socks again, in red and white clouds. Mary's children are all too big, and they wear white boughten ones."

"You're like the old hen, mother; you'd like some winter chickens. Did you know the old brown biddy was setting, away up on the farther end of the woodpile?"

"There, now, Richard! that's some of your putting up, I know! You do always like to be puttering with the creatures."

"So I do, mother; that's one reason you and I suit so well. See how pleased you'll be when she walks out with her fourteen chickens, and you have to take them all into the back kitchen and cuddle 'em in a basket! I look out for your little comforts,—don't I, mother? That puts me in mind; I've got your white Saxony; here,—is it fine enough?"

"Oh, that's charming good, Richard! Why, that's better than the last Hobart had,—isn't it?"

"And what's that? Will that do, too?"

"Well, now! How did you ever come to think of that, without my telling? I'll make you some sponge cake to-morrow. I never *can* make it, except in just such a yellow and white bowl. Why, yes, Richard, it's a beauty."

"And there's—what is it? oh, it's a new butter-print. Aint you tired of the rose? Those are daisies; and here's a pair of spats, to make little prickly balls with, or crimped rolls. I can show you; Mrs. Hobart told me how."

Mrs. Hathaway's lap was full now; and her face was as pleased as a child's. "It wasn't the things so much," she said; "but it was being always thought of; and Richard's way."

"Well,—I suppose you must have some peppermints, too,

to keep you good. You'll have to hold your hands, though, for the paper's all untwisted."

" Didn't you get a letter from Hope?"

" Why, how craving you are! Haven't you got enough yet? Why didn't you ask before?"

" Well, I thought I'd wait and see. Only when you came to the goodies, I began to be afraid; for I *have* been expecting word from her."

" Didn't you suppose I knew you'd expect the sugar-plums? Well, there's the letter; and that *is* the last thing."

" And that's the best bringing of all," said Mrs. Hathaway.

" I may as well take away the rest, then;" and Richard relieved his mother's lap of its burden, and gathered up the papers and strings, and put the white yarn and the peppermints on her work-table, and went off with the rest to Martha.

Hope wrote: —

" Miss Chism has made up her mind to come home on Friday, and I am glad of it, for I feel as if you had spared me, now, longer than you ought to; but I wish I could only tell you what a beautiful time we have had. It is a kind of a time that don't go off with the having, but that I can bring home with me to keep. If it had been only people and shops, as it was in Boston, I might have forgotten in a little while, — at least a good deal of it. But I never can forget the sea. There has been one stormy day, and a long blow; the September gale, they think. Yesterday it was pleasant again, and we went down to the shore to see the rollers. They came in like great, leaping lions, roaring, with terrible white manes. They plunged upon the land, and grasped at it, but never reached any further than just where it was measured that they should come. And I kept thinking of the still, green country away back from it all, where it never gets; and how the strangest thing of all is that it is always here, when we are up there in the stillness, and some of us in our lives long have never seen it. There have been many things in this journey of ours that have made me think how close things may be that we know nothing about. They make me think of 'the land that is very far off,' and yet perhaps only far off just as these are, till the minute when all at once we come to them — so easily.

" Dear Mrs. Hathaway, for all the pleasure I have had, and for which I am so very thankful to Miss Chism and to you, I do long to come home again, and I am so glad that by next Saturday I shall see

you. We shall get home to New Oxford late on Friday, and as Saturday is Richard's day for coming in, I shall be all ready to go back with him. Give my love to him, and to Martha. I do hope that little spotted kitten is safe. She did get under the rockers and into the doorways and everywhere else where she shouldn't be, so. I'm so afraid if Martha leaves the top of the eistern off, she'll tumble in. I want to find everything just exactly as it was, safe and well; most of all, you; and that you are not tired out or discouraged with my staying away so long.

"Your thankful and loving,

"HOPE."

There was something scratched, just after "loving."

Hope had been going to write "child," as Mrs. Hathaway did in the beginnings of her letters to herself. She thought better of that, and so there was only a thin little place in the paper instead.

CHAPTER XXII.

SAFE AND WELL.

I HAD written to Augusta Hare, after our arrangement was made to go to Duxbury. I thought I ought, after what Grandon Cope had said to me of her, and of her wanting me. I only told her, simply, that I had met Mr. Cope, and what he had said ; that my aunt had changed her plans, and that we should be away perhaps a week or two longer.

If I could only put off, and keep away ! It was the only relief — perhaps it was a cowardly one — to myself ; but I felt also that it was the best kindness to others. Allard Cope would surely see ; it would be as decisive as words. Yet I could not get out of my mind what Aunt Ildy had declared so positively, with her old-fashioned authority of experience, — “ If he has got anything to say, he will say it.”

I purposely restrained from giving anything like an address, though I knew, of course, they could find out from Uncle Royle if they desired. I only mentioned that Aunt Ildy was going to take us to visit some friends at the sea-shore. I hoped Augusta would not write to me, and she did not.

It was wonderful how Hope’s nature seemed to bloom and enlarge, — how quickly she received and assimilated, — in all these new experiences and opportunities. It gave me a conception of what a simply true glad spirit might come to in the kingdom of heaven, and how speedily.

How well I remember the moment when we first caught the great breath of the sea ! Not a mere flavor, or chill, such as the east wind brings up into the city streets, or over far-away fields ; but the full, strong, tingling, glorious life with which every pulse of the air comes charged, seeming as if truly

given up out of the pure depth in its mighty, wonderful re-spirings.

We spent much time upon the shore. We went in parties, and we went by ourselves; we had whole long mornings there. We sat on the old rocks, and looked out upon the blue boundlessness of air and sea, as into spiritual spaces; life — the trifle of human doing — was left behind upon the land. How small seemed the few, divided happenings and concerns, — the day's round and motive, — back there in little Broadfields or New Oxford, or the restless and contrary impulses of the promiscuous city, in view of this great unit, moving in tremendous majesty, to and fro, drawn only by the awful influences of heaven!

There could be no better place in which to lose a small or a selfish regret, or an overweening anxiety. I thought less of myself; I seemed, indeed, to have got away from myself; to have left that insignificance behind. I drew in breaths from an infinite freedom, that seemed to widen my heart and make it strong.

Hope used to sit in long silences, with that awed light in her golden, lustrous eyes, and then come back, as it were, just to say something out of an apocalypse.

“It is like the earth changing and melting away; turning from *things* to spirit; from glory to glory; from purer to most pure. The water — and, beyond, the sky; it is like the Hem of the Garment!”

She put her hand out toward the white fringe of the incoming waves, that had crept up, in the sunlighted morning tide, nearer and nearer us where we sat.

It was the last still, summer-sweet morning of those September days; after that came the gale. I have the picture of it now in my very heart; and I hear Hope's word again always as I look upon it.

They kept us there for more than a fortnight. There is little such visiting or welcoming in these days. People can make morning calls, now, twenty miles away; if they go forty, perhaps they stay to dinner.

We got home on a Friday night. Hope was to stay with us till morning.

Lucretia seemed to be divided, in her comfortable reception of us, between the pride of her own house-keeping, and the abrupt realization that Miss Chism being actually there, was different from her being only expected. That the keys and the arrangements were to be given up; whether she should warm and feed her first and then do it, or whether she should relinquish all authority and let her choose how she would take care of herself, was a sudden problem of succession. She set forth her good cheer half deprecatingly.

Hope and I went to bed early, in the front room. We were tired and wakeful, both; Hope was restless with the feeling of being so near home, and not quite there; I had all my old perplexing worries, in the same old place, to get into again and cover myself up with just as I got into my bed.

So we lay with our eyes wide open, and making many unquiet turns, for a good while; now and then speaking to each other, but for the most part silent, for two reasons: we were really needing and longing to get to sleep; and in the next place, Aunt Ildy was in the adjoining room in her bed against the wall, and we might reasonably expect a sharp, warning rap if we trespassed upon the peace of the night with any chatter.

I think it must have been long past eleven o'clock before we became quietly unconscious, and I am sure that Aunt Ildy and Uncle Royle had gone off into dreams nearly two hours before, to the rhythm of "fifteen two, fifteen four;" for they had their long intermitted game of cribbage the first thing after tea was cleared away, and counted fifteens up to the very last minute of taking their candles and going off to their rooms.

It was a little after twelve, perhaps, when, from that first, sound, grasping sleep from which it is such a pain to be awakened, like the bringing back to life from almost death, that I started suddenly with a vague feeling of some noise, half-dreamed and half-realized,—a person knocking somewhere down below.

I sat up in bed and listened ; somebody really was moving about on the broad step at the top of the railed flight that ran up from the shop door to the house entrance. Somebody in great, heavy boots, who was tired of waiting, and who made as much noise as possible upon the little platform that allowed of three steps to and fro.

I sprang out of bed, and ran to the window ; just as I pushed it cautiously up, the knocking came again ; this time with a whip-handle, and rang through the house.

"For — gracious — sake !" cried Aunt Ildy's voice at her open door, instantly ; and Hope was at my side at the window.

I called to the man.

"What do you want, sir?" I asked.

"Has the folks got home?"

"The family is all at home,—yes," I replied, thinking it well that he should know, whoever he might be, that we were in full domestic force.

"I come over from the Hathaways," he called back. "The old lady's had an awful fall, and they want Hope Devine. I've ben for the doctor, and was to come and fetch her. She'd better be as spry as she can. Martha's awful scairt."

Hope had lit a match and a candle, and the light, as I turned round and saw her in it, showed her deadly pale, but she never said a word, only put her feet quickly into her slippers, and threw a flannel gown on. She was downstairs, and at the door, before I could make Aunt Ildy understand.

"Has the doctor gone to Broadfields?" we heard her ask, as the man came in.

"Yes, I didn't lose no time with *him* ; he's used to being knocked up. I guess I've ben a-trying my fists on that air door for a matter of twenty minutes."

"Come in, Jabez, and sit down ; I shall be ready in ten minutes."

Hope glided swiftly up the stairs again, and passed Aunt Ildy and me in the entry, with her pale face, still saying not a hindering word. She sat down on a cricket, drew on her stockings quickly, then sprang up and flashed herself, as it

were, into her other garments, one after another, tossed her hair back from her temples and rolled it into a knot behind, and had on her bonnet and shawl in less than the first seven minutes of the ten. I stood and handed her things.

Aunt Ildy had got on her wadded wrapper, and her cloth shoes, and her frisette, and had gone downstairs; and when we came, was giving the man a glass of wine, and some doughnuts, and hearing the details of what he had to tell, which Hope had not inquired.

"It was down the back-chamber stairs; most o' the way, I guess, from top to bottom, and it's a crooked flight. Martha says 'twas that air dreadful little cat, a-laying on the step. She aint moved sence; and they can't do nothing to git her out o' the sog."

"Drink a glass of wine, Hope, to warm you," said Aunt Ildy, fairly putting it to her lips, for Hope hardly noticed what was said. "The man's in a chaise, and I can't hinder you to get ready, either; but I'll be out there by sunrise. I've told Royle, and sent him back to bed, so's to get him up again in season."

Hope swallowed the wine, and it brought a kind of sob with its stimulation; but she still said nothing, only kissed Aunt Ildy and me, and passed—the same swift, pale vision—out of the house, the man following.

It was all over in such a mere fragment of time.

Aunt Ildy and I stood and looked at each other for a minute after the door was shut; and then she went back into the sitting-room, and put away the cake and wine.

"O Aunt Ildy!" I cried, going after her, and standing by. "What will they do?"

"I can't talk about it, child, I've got to save up. I shall take six drops of camphor, and give you six; and we must just hush up and go to bed again. I've got to sleep from now till half-past four o'clock."

That very first morning at home, while Aunt Ildy was out at Broadfields, Augusta Hare came down to see me.

"You behaved very badly," she said, with her graceful, polished playfulness, "running away and never coming to see

me, as was proper. But I have made up my mind to get it all over, and for fear, if I waited, I should find myself in duty bound to stand upon my dignity again, I have come right to you. You see I must have you for one of the bridesmaids ; not regular bridesmaids either,—there is to be no set, equal number of ladies and gentlemen ; but Grandon's brother, and some of his particular friends will be about him, and mine with me ; just grouped, you know, a sort of general, friendly backing up. And it is to be in a fortnight, now ; the cards are just going out. I think I am very good, Nannie, and I think you can't refuse."

"I do thank you very much," I said, touched by the persistence of her kindness, and her notice of me ; "but you don't know. Something has just happened. They are in great trouble out at the Farm, and Aunt Ildy is there. Mrs. Hathaway has met with a terrible accident. I couldn't think of dresses and weddings, now, Augusta."

Augusta's face changed. She looked really, more than disappointed ; as if some nicely adjusted plan had gone all wrong with a sudden, insuperable difficulty.

"Besides," I began again, and stopped. The rest was in my face, though ; in my consciousness, at any rate, so vividly that it touched hers magnetically.

"There isn't any besides," she answered quickly. "There's no use in building windmills on purpose to run against. I believe I frightened you more than I needed, out there at the Hathaways', that day. You were nervous, and I was looking too far ahead,—into my hopes and dreams for you, perhaps, Nannie. My own dreams had just come true, you know, and it seemed as if everything was going to turn out all at once, like the end of a novel ; or else be spoiled in some foolish hurry. We had better not have talked about it that day, Nannie. Everything always works out right, if people just keep straight on. That is what Grandon says. You don't mean to be rude to the Copes, surely, and throw back all their friendship in their faces, for no reason at all ? Especially now that I am going to be a Cope?" she added, with her little air of confident winsomeness.

I could see afterwards how it all was, and what it meant. I could not understand, at the moment, either Augusta Hare's magnanimity and patience, or the motive of her policy.

Why should she care so much for what became of me? Why should I have been any part of her dreams?

It was simply a mixture of vanity and good-nature, added to a natural love for planning and contriving, and a great tact in carrying things out.

Augusta must always be the centre of the tableau; I should do excellently well as an accessory. She liked me, and she thought I should never really be in her way. I admired her, too. She had always been fond of that childish homage of mine.

She was to marry Grandon Cope. In the charming surroundings of South Side, she was to be the conspicuous object; the young, elegant matron; the mistress in years to come. The full light was to fall upon her. It would depend very much upon whom Allard married, whether any shadow of rivalry interfered, or any cross light spoiled the grouping. It would be all very well if he took quiet, little, grateful me. That would be quite comfortable, and really help to complete her happiness. She knew all about me, and liked me, and I looked properly up to her. There was thorough kindness, too, as far as it went; she knew it would be such an excellent thing for me; so much better than I might have expected; and it would be such a satisfaction to have assisted to bring it about.

She had had time to think that she had made a misstep; that the light in which she had put affairs in that talk at Broadfields was fatal, in my then state of feeling, to the whole. Perhaps she discerned somewhat, with that subtle tact of hers, of the secret, hitherto undefined influence, that suddenly shaped itself to a dim recognition with me, and knowing that now, in the nature of things, this must change, or subside into its suitable place, she judged that the undue revulsion of my feelings might, perhaps, be temporary; that all would look different to me again by and by.

She wanted to get back to safe, uncommitted relations; to

let things work a little longer ; so, perhaps, they would work out. Allard must speak for himself, when the time came. I think she had doubtless become very elder-sisterly and intimate with him already, and won his confidence in that marvellous way in which she won everybody's. She had probably eased his mind as she was trying now to ease mine ; persuaded him that this going away would be quite as likely to result in his favor as otherwise ; that girls had to have time to find themselves out ; if they were let alone awhile, they would know better what they wanted.

I can somehow imagine just what she would have been likely to say.

She left me that morning, remarking that she would come in again, or send, to-morrow ; she should be anxious to know how Mrs. Hathaway was ; she was so excessively sorry that anything should have happened to her.

The next morning, when her little note of inquiry came, I had to answer that Aunt Ildy was still at the Farm ; that Mrs. Hathaway continued in the same strange, dangerous state ; that I supposed there was little hope that she would recover her injuries ; that the doctor feared there was broken nervous connection in some part of the spine, from the shock of the fall ; that they were all in great trouble, and that I was greatly troubled for them.

Neither she nor I spoke further of the interrupted plans. Augusta was always well-bred ; she always gave way to proprieties.

So a week went by. Aunt Ildy drove in twice to see how we were getting on, to bring us news, and to get things that she wanted. At the end of the week, dear Mrs. Hathaway was gone. Out of the still, mysterious half-death, half-life, that held them all in such pain and anxiety, she passed, with a hardly perceptible change at last, quite away from their sight and hold, into that fulness of life which needs not the body, but leaves it to its rest.

And Richard Hathaway was all alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WINTER DAYS.

WHAT would Hope do now?

People began over again with that, already.

"She can't stay there with that young man, of course," said Lucretia; and everybody else, we knew, was saying the same.

It made me cross.

"It's her home, Lucretia," I said, snapping up all Broad-fields over Lucretia's shoulders. "Why *shouldn't* she stay there? 'That young man' has always been there; it's nothing new; and she's used to his ways, and nobody could make him half so comfortable as she can."

"That's for he and she to settle betwixt themselves," replied Lucretia, with short significance.

"I shall come back to-morrow, and stay a week," Aunt Ildy said to Hope, the afternoon of the funeral, when we had got back to the Farm. "That's as long as I *can* stay; Royle's rheumatism is beginning to plague him, and he wants me; but that'll give you time to look round and settle your plans."

"Why, Miss Chism, I haven't any plans to settle!" said Hope, simply. "I shall just try and keep everything on, her way. I don't want there to be any difference, except—" The thought of the great difference stopped Hope's word with tears.

"Child, can't you see that it *is* different? Do you suppose you can stay on here? Richard Hathaway's got to have a house-keeper. You aint old enough."

Hope's face flushed, but not with the idea Miss Chism intended to convey.

"I don't believe anybody, ever so much older, could do any better for Richard than I would. I know just how he likes things. Why, Miss Chism, he couldn't get along with any new — old — woman!"

"It isn't that, Hope. Can't you see? It isn't proper. Folks would talk."

Then Hope saw. Then she grew grandly indignant. Her pure intent for the first time clashed against the world's careful and ostentatious wall of defences, and struck young fire against the stones.

"Do you think I would go away for *that?*" she cried, with the blaze in her eyes. "When he needs me so, and nobody else could do? When his mother depended on me so? Depends on me *now*, Miss Chism?"

"Well — only we aint quite in the kingdom of heaven yet," said Aunt Ildy, slowly, and very dubiously.

"We're in God's world, dear Miss Chism, and just where he has put us every one," said Hope, sweetly and solemnly. "I *know* I ought to stay — a while — and look after Richard. Everybody mustn't go away and leave him, all at once. Why, he wouldn't *let* me go, Miss Ildy, I don't believe, even if you said so to him!"

"I shall come to-morrow, and stay a week." Aunt Ildy returned upon this, and let it rest there for the time.

It ended, in Hope's taking, quietly, without any more talk, her own way. She stayed on, with Martha and Richard, following her old, simple round of duties, living just as she always had lived. People talked, — of the "strangeness of her not minding," that was all, of course; Hope knew little of what they said, and cared less.

And so the winter went by.

The Grandon Copes were married and gone. Gone to stay some few months in Washington, during the session; before they returned, they would visit Cincinnati, and Professor Mitchell's new Observatory, — a great interest with Grandon Cope, and an enterprise of which he and his father had been among the liberal helpers. Grandon had his own large, independent property, bequeathed to him by his English great-

uncle, the late Hugh Grandon, of the famous London mercantile house of Grandon, Cope, & Co.

And I was settled down again, in the old routine. My life had gone back into plain prose again. Even the perplexities that had been a painful excitement, yet still excitement while they lasted, were over. That afternoon, when Aunt Ildy would have the fire lighted in the best parlor, and such a ceremony made of his coming, like a "conference" among the Grandisons,—when I saw Allard Cope alone, and listened to what he had to say, and had come determinately, as she foretold, and demanded of Aunt Ildy permission and opportunity to say; when I had answered him, plainly and sadly, that it was a great deal better than I had any deserving for, and that I was ashamed, and sorry, and grateful, but that it could not be, it would not be honest to him to let it be,—that winter afternoon shut down and ended, with the short twilight, the brief romance also, that had gleamed into my homely life.

When I think of the rest of that winter, I just remember putting on, day after day, the same dark-brown cashmere dress, with narrow, bright-colored Persian stripes; sewing in the afternoon with Aunt Ildy on a new dozen of shirts that we were making for Uncle Royle; putting a fresh part-breadth—matching the stripes carefully—into my dress, when I had burned it one day against the stove; setting in new undersides to the tight-fitting sleeves when they had frayed at the elbows; taking out and putting away the tea-things and freshening the fire, and keeping on with the shirts, in the evenings, while Aunt Ildy and Uncle Royle played cribbage between tea and bed time. I remember Richard Hathaway's sad face and quiet manner, as he came in every Saturday and brought Hope's nice butter, fresh and sweet as June all winter. I do not think I remember anything else.

Allard Cope went to New York, and began to practise law. The house at South Side was shut up for several months. Mr. and Mrs. Cope were in Boston. The girls were with them a part of the time, and for a part were visiting in different places among their friends.

Nothing happened. All the happenings had been in those

few summer and autumn weeks. Nothing ever would happen, I thought, again.

It was nearly spring when Uncle Royle was taken down with that rheumatic fever. He had had a good deal of his old rheumatic pain and stiffness, all winter; but during the mild, damp weather of February he took cold, and after that a terrible inflammatory attack set in, which laid him up with tedious and intense suffering for nearly two months.

Then Aunt Ildy and I had our hands full with nursing; and then I found out yet more of what Aunt Ildy really was. She was sharp and imperative. It was, "Here, quick!" "Give me that!" "Run and do this!" "Don't hinder; hush; there! let *me* come!" But how dearly she did love Uncle Royle!

I could seem to see the little boy and girl, — brother and sister, — between them then, as if they had never grown old, or slow, or hard.

We kept his limbs swathed in wet, cool bandages; and he thought, in the wanderings of fever and pain, that he was a child again, wading in a brook; and Aunt Ildy humored him, and talked about the fishes, and the brook lilies, and school-time; — he got his real anxiety about his business all mixed up with his fancied boyish worry about being late at school, and missing his lessons; — "but I must keep my feet in the water a little longer, Ildy," he would say; "I must go into that deep place once more; I want to feel the water up to my knees; it takes the fire out."

And she would tell him "there was plenty of time; the academy quarter-bell hadn't rung yet."

"You'll tell me when it does, won't you? I think I should like to lie down here, and just go to sleep a minute."

And then, perhaps, she would shake her finger at me, in her sharp, impatient way, and point to the window-shutter, with a push at it in the air, for me to go and shut it closer; and all the while, her voice would be so kind to him, saying, "Yes, Royle, go to sleep; it's shady now; and there's plenty of time;" and more than once I saw tears in her eyes that she had no idea I knew of.

So I could be patient, seeing truly what was in her, and what her impatience came from ; and Aunt Ildy and I began to fit each other more comfortably and kindly, in that hard, weary time, than ever we did before.

When the days grew sunny toward the end of April, and as May came in, sweet and springlike this year, Uncle Royle grew slowly better ; and by the time the buds were bursting into leaf, and the balm-trees in the lane sent out their full breath of healing, and we had the windows open in the long, bright mornings, he could sit up and look out and enjoy it all, and eat his broiled chicken, or his broth. Richard Hathaway brought him a chicken every time he came in ; some of a late autumn brood that were large and beautiful now, fed all winter with sweet grains, and cared for as he cared for living things.

The spring cheered us all up ; though Aunt Ildy was "crazed" with the cleaning and the sewing and the thousand things that always crazed her when the drive was on; and that were a fearful accumulation now, from the demands of sickness that had so long thrust all else aside.

Lucretia had "expected it," she said ; "there'd ben a lookin-for of judgment in her mind all along, and now here 'twas. If there isn't a March wind in the house, there must be a May thunder-storm ; but 'twill be all the same, come June, let alone a hundred years hence."

So she worked on, with a great might, and a canty goodwill, from the attic lumber that must be all turned over once a year, and freshly bestowed, to the firkins and barrels in the rambling cellar ; until she declared, with a Spartan triumph, that "there wasn't a teaspoonful of dust in the house, nor a bone that didn't ache, through and through, in her body."

Martha came in one day, from the Farm, shopping, and stopped for a chat.

"What's the sperrichual use, do you spose, of spring cleanings?" says she. "It's a teachin' world, and so I presume there's a reason ; though why it wasn't all cleared up after the Creation, and fixed so's to stay, has always been one of the providential mysteries to me. Just think what the world *would* be, if it only warn't for dirt! Why, I don't see why-

it wouldn't be kingdom come, right off! Take away the wash-days, and the scrub-days, and the cleanin' up after everything, and clo'es growin' mean and good-for-nothin' with the grim o' wearin', and I guess there wouldn't be anything left but the 'rest that remaineth,' and the hallelujahs!"

Her quaint words struck me. It seemed as if the "putting on of incorruption" *would* hold the whole. I remembered them and told them afterward to Hope. She always had a "spiritual meaning."

"Of course," said Hope. "There's a reason; the same reason that runs through everything. It's a teaching world, as Martha says; we have to deal with the outside as we ought to with the in; they're made to fit, and help. If we didn't have to scrub and clean, how should we learn to be thorough with ourselves? and *thoroughness* is *trueness*. I think when we come to hate dirt in house-corners, we begin to hate it in soul-corners, too; and that's precisely what the training is for. I never thought of it before,—*exactly*," she went on, with her happy look of new truth; "but that's how cleanliness *is* next to godliness, and God's own sign for it,—isn't it? And that's why busy home-life is so good for people; we're doing double when we dust and put right, and we don't even know it. We're learning, like the babies with their blocks."

"A servant with this clause
 Makes meanest work divine;
Who sweeps a room, as by God's laws,
 Makes that, and the action, fine."

I quoted to her.

"Why, who said that?" she asked, quickly.

"George Herbert," I told her.

"Did he say any more like it?"

I wish I could put down the words to make them sound *like* Hope, as she spoke when she was bright and full, with quick, pleased thought; and when a thought was given her that met hers.

"Did he say any more like it?" The bits of Saxon syllables — her sudden, glad questions or exclamations

always shaped themselves in such — fell like rapid little ripples over her lips ; her tongue rolled, as it were, a swift, musical réveillée with them ; they were indescribable forthsprings of an instant, wide-awakened delight.

I found the book for her, and she took it home.

Hope grew just as the plants grow ; she sent out her rootlets, and she unfolded the fresh leaves of her own beautiful life, and from earth and air there came to her continually the feeling and the influences she needed. Knowledges gathered themselves to her ; she came across them ; “ everything put her in mind ; ” the most beautiful things were hers beforehand ; she knew them instantly, by sight ; by sweet elective affinities she made herself a dweller in the best, without need of deliberate, purposeful effort of culture, or far, painstaking search. I thought many times of what Richard had said of her and her gentle content : “ In the middle of her pasture.” I thought, too, of the words that were so like, — “ He feedeth me in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters ; he restoreth — ” he completeth — “ my soul.”

Hope came over often, after the spring business was over with us and at the Farm.

One day, while she was with us, she fell, two or three times, into some thoughtful, occupied mood, that seemed strange to me. Then, at last, just before she went away, she said to Aunt Ildy, with something of that same quick, rippling way of speech that signified also when a thing was all thought out and finished in her mind : —

“ I’ve come to it, Miss Chism. I’ve found out it will be best. And the work is done, and things are all straight, and summer is coming, and — perhaps — Richard can begin to do just as well without me. But — you see — where shall I go ? ”

She laughed a little fearless laugh, as the last four words came out in a spin of hurry ; as if it were only funny to think that at the moment she really did not know.

“ Come here,” said Aunt Ildy, right off.

“ Why ! *Might* I ? If I should quite make up my mind, — some day, suddenly, perhaps, — might I say that ? ”

"Yes; that's exactly what you might say; and the best thing, too."

"Should I be of any consequence — any help — I mean? Wouldn't it be a fifth wheel, Miss Ildy?"

"You're always worth your bread and butter — and your cake, too. Come whenever you get ready."

I sat by, thinking how strangely things came about, all in a minute; wondering what Richard Hathaway would do without her, or if he would let her go; and feeling how pleasant and nice it would be if Hope did come to live with us.

But first, — Richard had been talking about it this great while, ever since Uncle Royle began to get better, — we were to go to the Farm, all of us, and stay a week, — a week of the June weather, and the strawberries.

"It would do Mr. Chism so much good to get out of the town awhile. John Eveleith can manage."

John Eveleith, the young clerk whom Uncle Royle had had from a boy, had managed, all through his illness. Uncle Royle talked of giving him a partnership. He was getting old, he said, and could not expect to hold everything in his own hands much longer.

Richard planned it all, and asked us just as he would have done years ago.

He had kept his promise. "It was all taken back." He wanted us to go and come as we had done; that the old friendship should be the same.

I was so glad that he did; that he could; I thought he was getting well over it all; it was nearly a year now. I thought he had had, in his quiet way, a feeling of pleasant usefulness to me, a fancy that we could "get along" and be comfortable together; a gentle liking and tenderness for me out of the gentleness of his nature, — a nature that would only suffer quietly and be gently disappointed, — never rise to storms and spasms of passion and pain, — and that now, after these last months that had stretched themselves with all their heavier burden between, he turned willingly and freely to the old, simple friendliness that he needed, and we might go back into the summer time together.

It comforted me. It made me almost contented with my life, that had failed to enlarge itself to my hopes and dreams, but that held yet some sweet and simple reality.

There were two sides of me. There always were. With my plain, every-day self, I could take much comfort — I could nearly be satisfied — with that side of the things that came to me. We do not, any of us, stay always wound up to our highest, or hold at the most intense and painful strain. The spring begins to relax the moment the key has taken the last turn. Some homely comfort comes close upon — in the very midst of — the sharpest suffering. And I had not deeply suffered, except from self-blame. I had only come near enough a joy to see it, and to see that it was not mine. It was after the same negative fashion that all the pain of my life had been. Things were withheld. There was something in me that managed to take pleasure in such things as I had: I liked the tidiness after the spring-cleaning; the cosiness of afternoon work; Lueretia's exquisitely fresh and nice kitchen, and the sunshine streaming in, when I went there after the morning's clearing up, to beat eggs for cakes or puddings; the loud readings in new books to Uncle Royle; Aunt Ildy's gruff graciousness and strong dependableness; the feeling that, in my way, I had grown to be somebody at last; the thought of June days at the Farm again, and of Hope's sisterly companionship by and by.

There were other things in the world; I might have held a far greater gladness; but a piece of me was somehow glad to be comfortable in these.

It was not as though I had begun differently; I had been used all my life to the next best; to the making-do; to the dolls with eyes that would not shut, and the seat by the high window with the half-lookout. The possibilities that had touched me, and that I might not seize, began to seem far off and long ago. The strange thing would have been to me if they had really become mine.

I think I was always good at giving up, when it was once hopeless that I should have. Only I liked to go quite away from that which had been denied me into something else.

I was very glad of this new plan of Hope's.

It was just what was needed in the cup of our daily living; Miss Chism knew it as well as anybody. Something sweet and gracious should mix itself so, with what else, for very strength and goodness, might be harsh and acrid, and make it a real deliciousness.

Hope was always cream to Aunt Ildy's coffee.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT A VOICE TELLS.

OF THAT WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

HOPE DEVINE had begun to see it coming,—had begun to discern what this might lead to,—this staying on and quiet comforting.

She did not care what people said, about its being queer. She knew it was really no queerer now than it had ever been. She would not even have cared, perhaps, if they had said—very likely some of them did say—that “Hope Devine knew pretty well what she was about; it was easy to see what the upshot of all that would have to be.” She would not have cared while Richard sorely needed her, or if it had still been the best for him.

But when she saw this coming; this that she did see with her far-off, sensitive perception,—this misapprehension of himself that Richard might fall into,—she said quickly, in her heart, so quickly that it was not even heroism,—“No! That would not be true. That must not ever happen.” And then she began to think about going away; and she said to Miss Chism, that day, what Anstiss Dolbeare has told.

It was June, now; they would be coming soon; that was the best safety for all.

Hope never doubted, with her loving on sight, that what she believed to be the truth was yet to come to pass. I think Hope really loved the truth,—whatever she could “see clear,”—and its coming to pass in God’s gracious order, better than any wish or will of her own. No wish of hers could ripen against such clear-seeing, or bear the bitter fruit of selfish pain. Not any more, as she had said, than she could take to

herself that which was not her own. She was not heroic in this thing, simply because she was, by her high, pure nature, so far above heroism. Truly, they who lose their life for His sake, shall save it.

Richard Hathaway, in his silent fashion, was busy with himself. He had "taken back," grandly and generously, that which had been only pain and surprise to Anstiss Dolbeare; though he took back with it, into his own heart, a dead hope, grown, to this death only, out of all the years of his life. He meant to be simple-friendly again, and always.

She was coming, this bright June weather, to the Farm once more, in the old way.

But before that, he began to feel with a secret restlessness, that was partly self-distrust, and partly a longing out of his home and heart need, that there was something which perhaps he had better do. Something that would be fair to Hope; something in which an honest, tender affection for her mingled with the deep love for his dead mother, and his hallowing of her wishes for him; something that should give to his loneliness a life-long comfort and peace.

She was his dear little friend, always; she had stood by him through it all. Did not God mean it for them both?

Besides, he cared for in his manly, gentle consideration, in Hope's behalf, that which she disregarded, for his sake, on her own.

People should not talk about Hope Devine.

And this was all the home she had.

It was beautifully pleasant, all over the Farm, and in the house. The fields were ploughed, and harrowed, and sown. The slopes of the farther hill-plantings were crimped in faultless brown furrows. The young grain was vivid in green light, like a shining robe,—like nothing but the robe of life that shames our dead weavings, and shows us how the Lord knows how to clothe, out of the soul itself that he puts into things; how our own outgrowth shall clothe us by and by.

Every leaf was clean and new; the brook was glad with a new gladness, as of drops that had never been there before,

yet of a gathered whole that knew itself the same, and knew also its old, beautiful pathways.

In the house, was New England summer freshness. Every valance, and tester, and flounce, and window-drapery was white and fragrant with cleanliness. Every carpet was bright with a fresh face. Every table and chair was polished to a smile. It was pleasant just to move about among it all, and touch the spotlessness with the ends of one's fingers.

It was pleasant to Hope, who had managed it all; coming out after the early tea to the great doorstone under the young, sweet, breathing shade.

Richard came across the hall with his weekly newspaper in his hand, that he had brought that afternoon from the office.

Hope's happy face, and the light in her softly stirred hair, and her pretty figure, full, even in repose, of the same springing something that was in bough and leaf and breeze, stopped him. He hardly ever went by Hope without some word.

She turned as he came up.

"Busy little woman!" he said, in a fond, praising way.

"Not busy now, Richard. It's all finished. Just as—it always was. It seems, somehow, as if she was in the summer pleasantness, doesn't it?"

"Hope—you have never let her go! You have kept the feeling of her near, in everything. You don't know how I thank you, every day. With all my heart, Hope!"

"I am glad I stayed. It will begin to be easier now."

It was the first time Hope had ever alluded to any question of her staying. If there had been a question at the beginning, she could not have remained.

For this reason, it startled Richard now.

He laid his paper down upon the hall-chair by the door, and came out, nearer to her; came and stood at her side.

Something very earnest looked out of his true, kind eyes.

"Hope," he said, "you will have to stay here always. I cannot do without you. I want—I wish—".

"Richard," interrupted Hope, with her quickest word and smile, and her simple rippling monosyllables,—"you want me to do just right. I can't stay here all the time, you know.

I couldn't go, and leave you *then*; but now—I must go soon, Richard; but I shan't go far; and I shall come and see you, and stay and help sometimes. Don't say one word, Richard, please; it must be; I know it ought, and my word's given."

What word? Who could there be? Where was Hope going? The suddenness, and the puzzle of it, stopped what he might have said at the moment, and when he began:—

"Hope, I can't see. I don't understand. I meant to ask you, Hope—"

Hope interrupted again. She was like a little breeze of pure, bright air that came and blew away his words before he could get them ranged in a sentence.

"It's an *ought*, Richard. It will be best that I should go away. Your life will come all right,—righter than if—anybody—stayed and did *too* much, you see. You are so true, Richard; you have always kept one thought so, for so long; you have never let anything come between, and you never will; you have such a steadfast heart; it is so right that it should come to be for you, Richard, that it will. I feel sure it will. And then, I shall be so glad all my life, that I did not let any little help of mine, that you might have leaned on more or longer than you meant, come in the way. And now, let me tell you what my plan is. I am going to Miss Chism. She wants me. Mr. Royle is getting old; and Miss Ildy isn't young, or so strong, I think, as she was. And I think — when once I am there—it will begin to come all right, for everybody. It seems to me I can see just what God means by it. Why, Richard, sometimes he *does* lead us, just a little way, in a path we can see on in; or he puts some new light in our eyes for a while, and then we have part of his own joy, helping to bring his work to pass. I have looked and looked at it; and I see it clear. I think I do."

Richard could no more have gone on with what he had begun to say, than if it had been an angel from heaven, instead of a mortal woman, who stood there by his side. It seemed almost as if she did come to him, with the very word of the Lord, as the angels came in visions of old. And with what

she said, — with her bright, sure prophecy of what was to be for him, — something stirred so in his own heart, something so sprang to meet the hope she gave, that he knew not only that all was not dead, but that nothing of it could ever die ; that in his soul he was true, as Hope said ; steadfast to the old thought and the one love ; and that it would have been a mistake and a wrong if he had said the words she stopped upon his lips.

They stood there, man and woman, at the threshold of a life that might have been ; tenderness, each for the other, in their hearts ; comfort that each could give, waiting ; a feeling of need and longing, real and conscious to them both ; yet truth stronger than anything ; patience for God's way and time chosen in the stead of their own impulsive and precipitate will. And Hope — the woman — to whom the gift came — did this, and put the gift away ; put it away without ever looking at it, so that in after time she might have had any blessed moment to think of, of which she could have said, *Then it was mine.* She had never looked at this thing, that she might have desired, long enough to be tempted. From the beginning it had been decided away from her. It belonged to some one else.

So she should go her way, unscathed ; her eyes still touched with the clear, glad light ; her hand in God's.

It was a deep, beautiful, holy moment to them both, — a moment they would remember all their earthly lives, and that should come back to them in the time beyond, when all things shall come back and be present, except repented and forgiven sin.

They sat down, together, there on the great door-stone. In the June sunset, under the sweet, swinging boughs. They sat there silently, with thoughts in their hearts that were like prayers. The evening star came out in the midst of the western glory, and glimmered high up through the delicate fretwork the young boughs made against the sky.

Hope knew there was no danger ; that there never would be, any more ; that God had given her a better thing than love to keep, — a love to give away.

Richard Hathaway felt himself near all blessed and beneficent presences, in the presence of that woman-friend beside him. The Father's care,—his great, rich meanings for him,—the wide To-Be, in which all waited; the gentle pulse of the invisible mother-love, beating near him in the all-holding peace and promise; the steadfast truth that was in him, that had been saved to him, clear and clean, to live on and claim the answer and accord that are surely somewhere for all steadfastness and truth;—an unspeakable fulness of all these lifted and enlarged his consciousness into a grandeur and a blessedness he could not have told of; that only overswept him and held him there, under the summer-evening heaven, and at Hope's side.

They stayed there, saying not one other word; until the beautiful planet shone all golden from a sea of blue,—the sunset splendor gathered slowly, as it were, into its one point of changeless light,—and down upon the earth had fallen the tender gloom that is like the shadow of a shielding Hand; until the few still sounds were stiller yet, and the violet perfume came up richer through the evening dew, and a cooler breath began to search the green tree-chambers.

Then Richard got up and held out his hand to Hope, taking hers with a strong, fervent grasp.

"I thank you, Hope," he said, "for one of the best hours of all my life."

And Hope was thanked.

Away back in the house, moving to and fro between tea-room and pantry and kitchen, Martha had caught glimpses of the two sitting out there together.

"*That* aint no millstone," she said, with three or four measured, decided nods of her head. "There aint no credit in seein' through that. But ef ther was, I done it, I guess, pretty much, even, afore they did. They can't come tellin' *me* any o' their news."

CHAPTER XXV.

OUT AT THE LEDGES.

It led to my being back and forth at the Farm again, as of old.

Richard was so quiet and so kind. It was not as if he had looked pained and sad, or had been constrained with me. It did not seem a hard thing for him to have us there. It was just the old, plain, cordial way ; it did him good, he told Aunt Ildy, to have people in the house again.

He liked home pleasantness so. That was it. I thought that if any other woman had come in his way just as I did, it would have been the same. That it would be the same again, with somebody else ; perhaps with Hope.

Hope came home with us after that June visit. Uncle Royle was better, and was busy in his shop again. But he took more relaxation, and this summer he bought a horse and a light wagon, and nearly every pleasant day he took a drive. Very often it was out to the Farm ; and so some of us came to be there at least two or three times a week, always.

Now that I was left to myself, and something of peace had come back to me, seeing that apparently, according to Aunt Ildy's word, the chance was already more than even that "they would both get over it," — I began to feel how great a part of my life would have gone from me if that intercourse with the Farm had ceased. How Richard Hathaway held some certain place with me, that I could never spare him from ; that he answered, as he had done during my childhood, one great need for me ; he gave me simple rest, — the rest of perfect reliance.

Sometimes I thought if I only could have given him a little more, when he asked it, what a sure, peaceful, tenderly-cared-

for life mine would have been to its very end, with him. How happy some other woman, just a little different from me, could be at Broadfields.

And then I wondered, whether, in such case, the old friendship would still be there for me. It is hard for a woman,—and from the way of the world such alternative not seldom comes to her,—when she must either marry or lose a man; take him for a husband, or lose him for a friend, practically; losing all the near opportunities of friendship.

If it were Hope,—but what if it should not be she? What if some stranger were to come there all at once, caring for none of us? I thought I should be jealous of such a love as that in Richard. Jealous with that quiet, wonted home side of my heart, as I had been with the more restless, asking part of me, of Augusta Hare.

I think I understood myself less and less in those days. It seemed as if there were capacity in me for two separate, utterly distinct and different lives; that I might live either, if the other were never touched or awakened; but what was I to do between them both? Between the two sides of me that could not be both lived out?

Mr. and Mrs. Grandon Cope were at home for a little while in the early summer; then they went away to the White Mountains, and to Niagara. Whenever I saw Augusta, she was as kind as ever; but the indescribable change of marriage had come over her; she was Mrs. Grandon Cope. Her life—their lives—taking up their own, had left me out, as it were, and further off. Safer, so; I was not near enough to be troubled; it had only been when I stood, for a little, close upon some beautiful, vague possibilities, that might gather to vital certainty, and make my world, that I had been in the chaotic pain. The certainty had gathered itself, and it was not mine; it rolled away upon its own bright orbit that seldom intersected mine, and left me to a kind of uncreated stillness for a time; the elements of my fate yet waited.

I never cried for far-off and impossible things; I reacted quickly from all acute disappointment, as far at least as a passive dreariness. Because I was capable of too keen suf-

fering, if once I let myself begin to suffer. I wondered, in those days, how people gave themselves up to pain and grief; it seemed to me it could be only in the shallows of misery; in the deep sea, one must either sink or swim.

Aunt Ildy had a quilt to be made; she had saved some woolen strips, too, for braided mats; that took us all out one day to the Polisher girlses.

It was August now; it was sultry and close in the town; out here, in this wide, rolling sea of green, among these little hills like softly rounded waves fixed at their most beautiful heaving, there was a wider breath and a wonderful sweet-ness. The dry, perfumy air, full of the woods and pastures; the notes of birds, not crowded into a single orchard, hemmed about with highways and human noise, but answering each other from green, distant depths that seemed infinite every way; the high sun in a great, pure sky that you could see from level rim to rim of the far-reaching woodland undulations,—it was as lovely, and as different from all else, as ever.

I had thought of the Polisher girls and their home, instinctively, last year, when I felt as if I wanted a place to run to.

I had never forgotten the peculiar outstretch and relief of that still, wide, verdant horizon, or the quaint, homely charm of the old house. It was more than a change of place and outlook to come there; it was going back in time; taking refuge in a generation passed away into its peace; getting behind one's self and one's perplexities, into the years when they were not born.

"I wish I could stay here a week!" I exclaimed, impulsively, standing with Aunt Ildy on the threshold.

"You can as well as not," said Lodemy Polisher, with blithe alacrity. "Why won't you, now?"

"Austiss Dolbear! " said my aunt, with two-syllabled awfulness. "That is just like you! I am amazed!"

She was so awful, that her little inconsistency escaped her own notice.

"I did not mean to invite myself," I answered. "I only meant how very, very pleasant it was."

"Why didn't you just say, then," said Miss Chism, with grand monotonous deliberation, "how very, very pleasant it was? Only other folks can see it, without your telling."

Miss Chism was all Chism when the proprieties were invaded. Little, easy, social freedoms were what she could not tolerate.

Nevertheless, it came to our spending a day there, a week or two later; a long August day, that ended—I shall put down in its place how it ended; the beginning and the going on are very pleasant to remember; and how good it is that both ends of a day, or a year, never do come together; no, nor both ends, nor any confusing, counteracting points of a lifetime!

Richard Hathaway brought us the invitation. One of the Polisher girls had been over, to bring Martha a basket of such huckleberries as came from nowhere but the wild pastures back of their little farmstead, among the green billows of that beautiful, solitary country-side.

"As big as green grapes, every one of 'em," Lodemy said; not specifying at what stage of the grape growth, but probably the contemporary. Black and shining with rich, distending juice; firm and perfect; it was such a pleasure to plunge one's hand deep into the full basket, and to eat them out of one's palm; new wine of the summer, in new skins,—fern-flavored, aromatic,—one swallowed from their sweet, crushed globes.

Lodemy, and all of them, wanted us,—Hope and me,—to come out and spend the day, and gather for ourselves, to bring home; and the quilt, also, would be ready. Next Thursday, would we? Come bright and early, and do our picking before the sun got hot.

What a way we have of saying that, as if the great Glory gathered radiance and intensity as we wheel our little meridian toward him! Even so we talk also of the Love that waits and burns in heaven for our slow turning!

Aunt Ildy would be glad of the berries; we were glad of the picking. So we had the horse and wagon, and drove ourselves over, on the Thursday, stopping at the Farm with a message for Martha, and getting a pleasant word with Rich-

ard, standing in his white shirt-sleeves by the gate. He walked up from his meadow-haying when he saw us coming round the bend, and brought in his hand a bunch of splendid scarlet cardinals.

They were as becoming to him as they could be to a woman, as he stood there in his fresh white linen,— somehow Richard Hathaway had a marvellous way of keeping himself unspotted, even in his homeliest labors,— his hands crossed, as he rested his arms lightly on the gate-rail, the long, brilliant, plumy spikes slanting across his sleeve, his brown, handsome face with the summer glow in it, and the dark hair all in a summer toss about his temples under the deep-brimmed straw hat.

He gave the flowers to me, when we started on again. Richard always had a way of bringing flowers to me,— he had it with his mother, too,— flowers of the first finding; violets, or roses, or the midsummer magnificence of these. They came with a quiet little tenderness about them, as of a thought had of us in the still, pleasant places where he met their beautiful surprise. It was one of the things that touched me very much in the ways of Richard Hathaway; it touched me more now, that he had not changed or forgotten it with me, for all that had come and gone. It is so good to have a friend in the world.

It was eight o'clock when we reached the Polisher girlses. Already there was hardly a breath in the still, sultry air. There had been this still, intense weather,— not a drop of rain falling, only the heavy night-dews keeping things alive,— for two or three weeks. The wayside shrubs were dusty; the brooks ran low in their pebbly channels; out there, though, was the same green depth, sheltered in its own close growth, and fed by unseen, numberless springs. Up on the slopes, against the southerly sun, stood the high-huckleberry-bushes and the tall sweet-ferns, crowding the short, crisp swards.

Miss Remember stood in the door-way, in a thin, old-fashioned lawn gown, with a pattern of slender, long-branched, briery vines running widely over it; cool and soft with many summers' wear. Miss Submit looked over her

shoulder in a fine-striped lilac gingham; and Demie and Frasie came hastening from the back door, where—on their dear, beautiful stoop, doubtless—they had been shelling beans, less imaginary, for dinner.

Demie's calico had little brown thistles on it, and Frasie's pale pink pinks. They were made with loose front breadths, in a fashion of ever so long ago, with bishop's sleeves, and were tied round the waist with strings of the same, fastened in bow-knots in front. Frasie's had three more bows at long intervals down before, tying the open gown together over a white dimity petticoat. These two always dressed a little younger than the others, and Frasie was the most "tasty," they all acknowledged, of the four. So she had prescriptive right to the three little extra calico bows.

All their robes were worn to delicate thinness with age and much care and many foldings; such things, when you do see them nowadays, come out with a more especial fitness and reminding; they have seen so much just such hot weather before; they have been consecrated to it, and used for nothing else. They are like flags on the Fourth of July; they are put on with a touch and appropriation of personal importance, in the observance of this grand achieving and climax of the year. People are always a little proud, somehow, of very hot weather. One's planet—one's own part of it, at least—is doing her utmost.

We went out with Lodemy and Frasie to the little green. They gave us low, splint-bottomed chairs, out on the grass, and Hope and I fell to work with them at finishing the bean-pudding.

"It is so nice out here," said Hope.

She remembered all the fancies that had grown so real to them, and she commended in her words the whole pleasantness they sat in, that they had builded round them. It was there, to her, as much as to them. Hope did not wait, any more than they, for carpenter's work.

It was nice, however, presently and positively. For myself I hardly knew what they wanted the stoop for. The green-sward was lovely, and the sun got round away from it early

in the day, and you could sit there looking off into the bosom of pine shadows, and from brow to brow of the gently rising and dipping land.

"I most wish we'd had flat trellises instead of round posts," said Frasie. "But we can't alter 'em now, and they don't take up much room."

They certainly did not; though the "girls" had planted actual morning glories and Madeira vines in round plats just where the porch outline and the supports would have been. These climbed up rough poles, set for them as for garden vines; and from the tops were drawn some strings and wires up to the chamber windows.

"I wasn't going to have folks walking right straight through our *columes*, at any rate, as if they were ghosts," said Lodemey. "I couldn't stand that, it nettled me so."

"Member says it's clear nonsense; she thinks we're two great babies; and we don't tell her half," said Frasie.

"Babies never do," said Hope. Hope had great faith in what babies might tell if they would.

"We couldn't if we tried," said Lodemey. "We can't tell half to ourselves. Clear nonsense is a great plenty. There's nothing to stop you, you know."

"Why, clear *non-sense* is a beautiful thing!" exclaimed Hope. "I've just noticed what it really means. Clear non-sense is just what heaven is made of!"

"Frasie *would* have grape-vines on this west side," said Lodemey; "but they keep out the sunset. Grape-vines grow so all-over, in ten years, you see. And it's ten years and more, since we first planned it out."

Now there was no grape-vine on the west side, only an old settee, on which Lodemey and Frasie were now sitting, with their heels upon the rung, and their tin pans in their laps. This, however, kept people from "walking through," and defined their idea.

"I should trim it away," said Hope. "I should cut out a great, wide, arched window, and let the sunset in."

"Why, yes, indeed!" cried Frasie. "Why ever didn't you think of that, Lodemey, instead of always blaming me?"

"Well, there now! Sure enough! So I will!" And Lodemy Polisher did half spring off her seat, and spill over her beans into the grass, as if she were going instantly for shears. She sat down again, however, and shelled away in a very busy silence, during which I could almost hear the clip of the blades, so sure was I that the grape-branches were coming down,—in that "clear nonsense" realm where these Polisher girls wrought out so much.

"I do wish 'Member would have tea out here to-night. When she and Mittie are away, Frasie and I always do. But that's hardly ever more than once a month, you see,—sewing-meeting days; and that only makes three or four chances in a summer."

That was the first thing Lodemy said, after her silence. Plainly, she wanted to try how the sunset would seem, now that it was let in. I suppose she had ignored its beauty, from this place, consistently and conscientiously, for years. Now, she could fairly look it in the glorious face again.

Submit came out, just as we were gathering up the last stray bean-pods into the pan.

"'Member says we ought to be going," she said.

Submit always played second part to Remember, all through the family economy. How they ever missed her appropriate diminutive, and came to use the second syllable of her name instead, occurred to puzzle me already. From this day forth, she was always "Sub" to me, and I found it a difficult deliberation to put the "Miss" and the "mit" at either end when I spoke to her.

"And she wants to know if you've got barks enough?" she added.

Lodemy answered by going to a deep drawer in a high mahogany chest, resplendent with many pendent brass handles, which filled up one end of the narrow room that opened upon the "stoop," and producing thence, one after another, five "barks" and a little deep, long-handled basket. The barks were quart measures, made of white birch, neatly sewed into the ordinary shape, and provided with loops at the top, through which a string was passed, to tie it round

the waist in picking, that both hands might be left free for the bushes. Each sister had her own particular bark, and there was one over for company. Lodemy lent me hers, and took the little basket.

Two large peck-baskets, which we were to bring home full, completed the equipment. The uniform of the party consisted of sun-bonnets,— calico tunnels, framed on stiff strips of pasteboard of precisely equal width, and capable of being folded flat, to put away, or of having their bones drawn, for the washing and starching process. There were plenty of these, for they always made one when they had a remnant of calico of the right size ; they were “so handy.” Into their farther ends we dropped our heads ; after which we could only look at each other by carefully bringing two cylinders in line, and waiting a second or so to accustom our eyes to the depth, and then presently, a face could be discerned, exactly fitted in, at the bottom of either. The advantage was that the all-seeing sun himself could no more easily get at us, — hence, “sun-bonnets.” We saw Nature in scraps ; like a great picture looked at piecemeal through a tin tube ; which of course brought out and intensified what we did look at, very much indeed.

Oh, how sweet it was among the huckleberry-bushes ! How the ferns sent up their spiciness from under our feet and against our garments, as we pressed through them ! And how dry the mossy turf was, and warm with the long-lying sun ! How the rich black globes rolled from our fingers’ ends, at the merest touch, into our suspended barks ! There would be no need of stemming afterwards ; we kept them clean as we went along.

Remember picked severely ; never eating one. That was the way she went through her life, laying up all her joy for a pie that was to be baked by and by. Submit did as she did ; Lodemy and Frasie took a little of theirs as they went along. So did Hope. She ate more, and gathered more, than any of us. She kept time with Mittie and 'Member in pouring into the big basket ; bark for bark she brought in ; yet her pretty lips were all purple-stained with their sweet present pleasure.

I worked in company with the younger Polisher girls ; we did not fill up so quickly. I could not keep still and satisfied enough ; it was too often "over there" with me ; I lost time in struggling from bush to bush. Hope always found a good place, and always got all there was ; she was never in a hurry to look for more ; she had scarcely shifted her position three yards since she began. She kept more cool and comfortable than we did too ; she found little sitting and kneeling places under the high, loaded bushes, and just coaxed down, with easy touches, her fingers playing all about among the stems, the ready fruit into her bark.

"How could I help it? It was all right there," she would say, when we wondered at her full measure.

I read lessons, that day,—out in the sweet-smelling pasture,—lessons over again that I had read before.

It grew stiller and stiller. There was a dim, hot haze in the sky. The sun climbed up, and up, and the earth lay breathless under his glory.

We kept in the edge of the pasture, near the black-green shade of the pines. A little spring trickled patiently just within our hearing.

"That is exactly behind my house," whispered Frasie, furtively. "It never fails. It's living water. My dairy's there ; and I've a cream-colored cow that gives fifteen quarts of milk."

"There's a little brook runs down by my garden," said Lodemy. "And there are lilies and water-cresses."

"We shall have thunder this afternoon," said 'Member, coming over to us. "See those brassy heads, low down in the south. When the wind comes, they'll blow up. Then the air'll be cooler."

"It's awful now," said Lodemy ; and she pushed back her sun-bonnet, and showed a face that, as to the mouth, was violet-black with huckleberry-juice, and as to the rest was royal purple.

"Lodemy Polisher!" cried 'Member. "You set right still where you are, and don't stir another inch till you cool off! You'll have arrysippleous just as true as you're a born child!"

Then she went round from one to another, making observations down each calico well, finding the truth at the bottom, in various shades of illustration, that it was growing far too hot to pick huckleberries any longer.

"Set down and rest, every one of you," she commanded; and Submit went down instantly, just where she was, in a flat, sunny space, full in the broil.

"Back here, Mittie, under the trees! Are you crazed and possessed?" cried Remember, marshalling and ordering as she might have done when they went huckleberrying fifty years before, and the younger ones obeying; till she got us all into the shade, where we leaned ourselves upon the turfy knolls that curved themselves for luxurious rest all up the easy slope, and listened to the hot, shrill whirr of the locust, and the cool little drip of the spring.

We took little naps there, every one of us; not all at once, or confessedly; but between times; each one in turn waking up enough to speak, and to keep up the general pretence of consciousness by a lazy straggle of talk. Then, after a while, Lodemy's face having subsided to its normal mode color, we took up the peck-baskets between us, and straggled slowly home.

How nice the dinner was in the shady back room! Only a tea-dinner; the beans we had shelled mixed into delicious succotash with the sweetest corn and new churned butter; huckleberry pies, of yesterday's gathering and baking, made in deep dishes, with inverted teacups to hold the rich, splendid colored syrup; buttermilk bread, toothsome and tender, golden pound-cake, and crisp brown doughnuts, and creamy sage-cheese, and fragrant tea, drawn in the time-honored black earthen teapot that alone draws perfect tea.

It grew cooler while we ate; the wind began to sigh up from the south, and a shade to come over the sky. The locusts left off their rattle, as if they expected something else to speak. Once or twice there was a faint, far-off thrill of thunder.

Miss Remember went out to the front door when we got up from table. Away out over the woodlands, the trees

were turning up white undersides of leaves to the asking air. There was a bank of magnificent clouds in the south, definitely formed now, with great curling tops.

"The thunder-heads are rising," said Remember, coming in.

"We get pretty much the heft of the storms, out here among the rocks," said Lodemy. "All under that huckleberry lot is clear granite ledge; and granite draws the lightning. We're high up, too. There's nothing but Pitch Hill and Red Rock, that's any higher, for ten miles round."

"What do you talk that way for, Demie, before the children? Anstiss' face is as white as a sheet, now. The shower'll go round, just as like as not."

I tried not to mind; perhaps the shower *would* go round; but I felt my face pale, and the sick thrill running through heart and nerves that thunder in the air always gave me. I tried to think of the little birds in their nests, and of how many safe places the great clouds would sweep over and leave green, untouched. But all my life long I should never quite overgrow the horror that came so close to me out of the blackness and blaze, that night, outside the Copes' shut door.

We went upstairs. The Polisher girls were used to a little nap after dinner. The two large, opposite front rooms were open across to each other. Hope went into the elder ladies' apartment; they were going to teach her the shell-pattern for knitting. Miss Frasie took me with her; brought out of a dark corner cupboard some volumes of "*Persuasion*" and "*Northanger Abbey*," and put me into the great white easy-chair to read.

Then she folded down the smooth bedquilt, laid an old shawl across the lower end for their feet, turned up the night side of the pillows, and she and Demie prepared to mount. This they had to do by agreement, and with military precision, so as not to "roll" the bed.

First, they got crickets, upon which they stood at either side. Then, with exact calculation, each put a foot up, into the very spot where it was to stay; Miss Demie her right foot, Miss Frasie her left; then with a grasp of the bedposts they swung themselves up,—right and left face, the nice

point here being not to bump their heads as they met aloft; and then they sat, and finally reclined, everything turning out with the marvellous precision that could only come of perfect plan and long usage. Upon which, each sister said "There!" with a satisfied breath of accomplishment and giving up, which was a part of the performance and a beginning of repose. I suppose they had done just so for forty years.

Something in the idea of this, beside the funniness, diverted my nervousness, and gave me that sort of unreasoning confidence which we pick up against our fears in things that have been just so for ever so long. It had probably rained and lightened many a summer afternoon when they had as calmly and regularly done this; they had had their nap, the storm had poured itself out and cleared away, and they had got up unharmed and gone down and made tea.

Also there was a drifting of clouds along the horizon, and a sunbreak overhead, which at this moment encouraged my faith in the possibility that the showers would "go about." About, to somebody else perhaps, as afraid of them as I. Over the round world the tempests must break somewhere.

I even took courage to go across into Miss Remember's room before they all quite quieted down, to beg a set of knitting-needles and to look at Hope's stitch. We meant to make a quilt at our odd minutes, as a birthday present for Aunt Ildy. Hope had finished a shell, and lent it to me for a pattern. I went softly back to my easy-chair, and the whole house hushed up.

There was a great hush out of doors, too. The brief southerly stir in the air was over. Only some unfelt upper current swayed the drifting clouds, whose masses crept slowly higher up over the heaven. I would not look to see how high they were. The sun went in, and a shadow lay on everything. But that there does when a fleece of a hand's breadth crosses its disk.

I knitted back and forth,—three purl and three plain,—making my widenings at the corners.

Miss Lodemy and Miss Frasie were asleep, their feet resting in the selfsame hollows they had made in climbing up;

just one dint in each pillow under the head that had not moved; when they got up there would be two perfect prints of human figures, as of two fossils in a rock.

The far-off white tops of the woods were bending this way. The wind was coming up again.

Then pale shivers ran along the tall grass, swaying in its turn.

It grew darker and darker.

A faint gleam—I could hardly tell whether it were a sensation in my eyes only, or a flickering about my needles—came and went. It was just long enough to feel.

Is there anything more like spirit than the waking out of the slumbering air of this shining mystery?

Thunder muttered low. It was still far off, apparently. But how close the darkness grew!

A flash came, by and by, quite golden and distinct. It seemed to fling its pennon across me, through the room, and seize it back again, into the murk without.

I threw my needles under the bed.

Still Hope said nothing, and nobody moved. I would try not to be childish. As I thought this, came the challenge of the thunder, uttering in tone what had been telegraphed in light. Heavy,—turning itself in great globes of sound along the sky,—these bursting and pouring out a hurtling of minor, sharper crashes, like canister shot.

Then I stood up, noiselessly, on my feet. Still the Polisher girls slept on.

I never saw a day-darkness like that which gathered then. It seemed to be let down upon us, fold upon fold. It settled like a weight upon the house-top. It was like a pall across the chimneys.

Then I saw what I have never seen before or since.

The air grew incandescent.

Little crackles of fire sprang out in the gloom of the room. They shot and hissed here and there.

Not the noise,—for as yet there had been but that first peal,—but the *presence*, waked them. The Polisher girls sat upright on the bed. When they moved,—when I flung my-

self in terror toward them,— it was as if the stir struck out the electric partieles afresh from the overcharge about us. Between our faces sparkled the scintillations.

We were in the very focus of the storm.

There came a blue blaze, and a rending of thunder. A long, tearing, hurling, reverberating crash, as if hills were split and flung apart. The rain poured down.

We were all in a pale huddle in the little passage between the rooms. How we all got there we hardly knew. And still, among us, hissed and snapped the little fiery atoms with which the atmosphere was all alive.

“Come in here!” cried Miss Remember, and dragged whoever was nearest her. We hustled down, over the stair-head, into the dark, middle room. Hope pulled out the bedstead from the wall, and we six women heaped ourselves upon it. It was better here, where it was always dark, than out there where the awful murk had come upon us.

Over our heads,— under our feet,— beside us,— or everywhere,— was that shock and boom and multiplied fulminant crash?

Where was the lightning? We *saw* nothing.

No blaze; but from the height above our heads to the deep beneath, one terrible outburst and downburst; one unspeakable plunging blast of destruction.

Then smoke,— the house full; and a stifle of sulphur.

We were struck. Yet we were all alive.

Was the house on fire? Should we be driven out into the storm? Where would the flame burst out?

We could only wait, paralyzed.

Still the pouring smoke; the sickening sulphurous smell, and the taint of some burned woollen thing or other. A different smell of burning, beside,— burned plaster. We could not tell what it all was then. We only sat and trembled, and prayed, without any words.

For the tempest raged on; and we were still in its midst. Great purple streams— oceans of flame— filled the living air, and flashed through and through around us. Heaven and

earth were overflowed with livid light, and resonant with ceaseless and tremendous concussions.

We saw the small, terrible coruscations no more. We forgot to be comforted with that, or to think that the awful equilibrium was perhaps, for us, regained.

We cowered and wondered whether God could mean to make us die, and not have taken us in that first fearful threatening and close-coming of his power.

Still we supposed the house must be burning, somewhere. Smouldering slowly, perhaps, in some closet, or between the walls, or in some pile of quilts or clothing in that garret beyond us, where the lightning, doubtless, had passed through.

Go and look? Try to put it out, if it were there?

We dared not,—we could not move. All one blaze from end to end, through the little four-paned gable windows, was that usually dim, rambling space under the low rafters, whenever we lifted our eyes. Go there, through God's fierce fires of heaven, to look for some stray spark they might have kindled among poor rags or timbers? We thought as little of what might be left for to-morrow of house or raiment, as we should think among the melting elements of the Judgment Day.

Only one earthly thing I did think of, crouching there, mute, in the awfulness; it was the one thing of earth that does not fall away worthless, with its plans and its knowledges, among the fires. I thought of the one best love that earth had given me. The soul that had an inmost thought for me drew near me then. I thought of Richard Hathaway. How sorry he would be if he knew! How he would defend and comfort me if he could!

I scarcely thought of the storm as reaching him also; as holding a wide countryside under its cloud and flame and terror. It seemed as if it were only right here, over our heads; filling and rending this old, lonely house.

Sometimes there would be a little ceasing of the lightning; a little dying away and retreating of the thunder; a little slow hushing of the fiercely dashing rain. And then we could tell whether the daylight were beginning to come back or not.

"Does it lift a little? I think I see more light upon the wall."

And Hope would say, "It must be lifting somewhere, you know. Somewhere—west—there is sunshine now; other people are in it. We shall be there too."

And then the horrible blackness would roll over again, the faint day-gleam on the wall was lost, and there were only the leap of the lightning, and the tumultuous roar of the thunder, all about us, as they had been before.

Cloud after cloud; hour after hour; the storms lasted all through the afternoon. Cramped in every limb, we lay and clung together. Hope was quietest; she never clutched or grasped, as we did. When she spoke, her voice was so low and deep that it seemed to come from some far, solemn shelter away down beneath God's hand.

We got used to our terror. We bore it as people bear long pain. The sharpness of it died away. It seemed to me that I almost forgot what it was ever to have felt safe and careless; ever to have gone out and in under the sky and seen it blue and sweet. Was all this force and fury in it, slumbering, always? Might a bolt come down through the happy air, any time?

Did we go out there, among those wild pastures and gray, lightning-drawing rocks only this morning, picking pleasant fruits?

Was that little patient spring trickling there yet, among the pines?

Suddenly, after a burst that rattled from rim to rim of the horizon, a new sound came to us in the instant of comparative stillness; new as if we had never heard it before. A very small, slender sound; only the strike of a horse's hoofs, galloping over gravel, and then their deadened thud upon the wet sod.

"Hallo!"

"Oh, thank God! Richard!"

He had jumped off, thrown his horse's bridle round a post, and let himself in. I met him on the stairs.

As he came up, and I went down,—in that mere moment

of our meeting, he divined the whole. The story of all those dreadful three hours was in my white face, in my excited gesture toward him as toward a refuge, in that sickening, sulphur-mingled smell of burned hair and plaster and woollen, still pervading the house. From the very front and presence of death I came to him, and he knew it.

"Nansie?" he said, tenderly, anxiously, eagerly, and reached forward his arms toward me.

I let myself drop into them as into a safety. I was held against the heart that I had felt in the darkness. And then he put his face to mine, and kissed me.

The light was broadening on the wall. That last long, wide, rattling roll was the retreat of the tempest.

"It is all bright in the west," said Richard. "It is all over." How glad his voice sounded!

Then I began to shiver and tremble. I had been all tense with fear before. Now my teeth chattered, and I could not speak.

He brought me up among them all, into Miss Remember's room; where the yellow light from the peaceful west came in. He had his arm still about me.

"Why, I told you so!" said Hope. And the deep, low tone had mounted suddenly to something wonderful in its clearness. It was like an angel speaking *down* from God, now, out of the stilled heaven.

"I told you there was sunshine somewhere, and we should come to it again!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

DOWN THE PINE LANE.

HE went all through the house with us.

Awed, and shrinking, we ventured into room after room, where the terrible presence had been.

It had been behind, beneath us ; everywhere, almost, but in that dark, central spot where we had taken refuge.

The bolt had seized the east chimney, where the flue was warm from the kitchen fire. On its top it had parted, sending one stream down inside, sweeping clean with its dreadful rush every particle of soot and ashes, covering the floors below with their forced-out mass, and filling the house with smoke. It had torn up the kitchen hearth, hurling the bricks across the room, splintered the floor, and plunged into the cellar beneath ; finding a point and passage for its leap, doubtless, in the position of an old, heavy iron bar, which had stood leaning against the wall below since they could hardly remember when, and was now half buried, obliquely, in the earth, some yards away.

Upstairs, in the long garret-room, a rent in the roof and a split rafter, close beside the chimney, showed where the other portion of the fluid had come in. Just behind Lodemy's bed-head it was ; and following some great nail, or clamp, or bolt, a third current had torn through, caught the metal-rod around the high old-fashioned frame, on which its draperies had some time run, fused them in its fiery grasp, and flung them in molten drops all down upon blankets, coverlit, and carpet, burning holes, in every one of which a perfect shot was buried. This was the smell of woollen that had assailed us. The high, gilt, ornamented mirror-frame was blackened, and

beside it was torn plaster, and outside a clapboard burst forward near a waterspout that ran down the corner to the ground. This, split, and detached from its fastenings, told the rest.

Within the garret was a most strange confusion. As if the fearful spirit had found itself penned in, and had dashed itself hither and thither in mad, instantaneous search and trial for an outlet; seizing and flinging pell-mell one thing after another that failed it, in its grasp after that which should suffice to lead it through.

An old, disabled clock was disembowelled of its machinery; its springs and wheels twisted, melted, and scattered; its pendulum found sticking by its slender point straight upright in the floor. A bundle of light stair-rods was dispersed and driven in every direction, no two lay together; some had gone through the windows, out of doors.

Quite across the building from its point of entrance, the mass of the fluid had forced its way through beams and boarding, and found conduct by a new leaden pipe down into the water-butt by the kitchen door. Little streams seemed to have wandered and escaped here and there.

The wires over the girls' "stoop," on which the greenery grew, were destroyed. The poles and vines were prostrate; scorched. The lightning had come even there, and broken down their dream.

Frasie cried when she saw it. It was the worst of all. "They should never *know*," she said. "They could never tell what *was left*."

Other mischief might be traced and mended. But how could they mend their old, long fantasy, that had grown so dear and beautiful with years? *

Miss Frasie trembled and cried more and more. She was delicate, poor old lady, and sensitive, as imaginative persons always are; and the shock to her nerves had been very serious. Remember gave her aromatic hartshorn, and told her to behave; whereupon she stopped crying, and began to giggle, childishly. This was worse. *

"There! do exactly as you're a mind to," said Remember,

"and have it out; then you'll feel better. Only if you *can't* stop, keep taking the hartshorn."

"Now, see here," said Richard, coming in where we were gathered round her. "You've just all got to come over to the Farm and stay to-night, and as much longer as you will. You can't get tea nor breakfast here, even saying you were fit to, as you aint. That kitchen chimney has got to be looked to before you build a fire in it. Can you keep comfortable while I ride home, and bring back Jabez and a wagon?"

Only Richard would have thought of that; that neither Hope nor I ought to have the care of driving; that we must be taken care of to-night in all things. I think he had found too, that the horse, standing fastened in the barn through all the tempest, had had nerves as well as we, and was hardly in fit condition for a nervous woman's hands.

So he left us, to bring back Putterkoo and Jabez. After he had gone, we stayed still in the room where we were,—the little oblong back room opening on the "stoop." I think they all had the same feeling that I had; of something weird and ghostly that had been through the house; that somehow seemed like an uncanny presence still.

It grew dusk; the sun was down. There were tall old lilac-bushes close to the windows of this room, reaching away up to the very eaves. The shadows gathered quickly; we sat closer together.

"Hadn't we better be getting our things on?" suggested Remember. "Men-folks don't like to wait."

How did she know about men-folks? Just as we know about flavors that we never tasted, yet can say "This, or that, is like them."

But to think of Remember Polisher asking anybody, "Hadn't we better?" Or even thinking of a thing that perhaps had better be done, without springing right up to do it! Yet 'Member sat on, and nobody answered. Nobody thought we had better, until Richard should come again.

I saw it twice before I said anything. At first I supposed my eyes were strained with all the glare and fright, and that I saw it as a sort of spectrum. But it came a third time, and

at the same moment Lodemy and I spoke out, involuntarily, "What was that?"

It was only a pale blue tremble in the air; like the shimmering of heat, but with this color added. It quivered for an instant, and melted out. It was like a breath; it might be dying breath.

"Why? Do you hear anything? Are they coming?" asked Miss Frasie, in her weak, thin, anxious voice.

"I guess not," said Hope. "Perhaps something went by, over on the road."

She shook her head, behind Miss Frasie, as she spoke. I knew by her look that she had seen what we did. But Miss Frasie must not be startled any more.

It happened again and again, however, while we waited. I breathed shorter and shorter, longing for Richard to come. Something rushed through my brain with an undefined, ignorant suggestion,—one word,—that I had picked up some time; I could not tell where, or how.

"*After-clap.*"

Was there such a thing? Might there be some force, slumbering, unappeased, unequalized still, around us,—under our feet? Might there be, after long interval, some sudden outbreak, some final, harmonizing discharge through this haunted air, these dislocated affinities?

I should have doubted to this day, perhaps, if we really did see it, only that after Richard came, and began to help make fast the house for leaving, Hope and he and I were all together by a doorway, when it came again. Faint, flickering, just visible, like a licking flame, it ran down along the door-frame, fading as it went.

"Did you see?"

We both turned to Richard, asking him.

"Yes. It's strange. But then it's all strange. It's coming round right, I suppose. Whatever it is, it's working off. There's always a way for everything, and it isn't *our* lookout, you see. Now wrap up; and let's be off."

He hurried us away. He would not let us stop to watch, or think, or talk.

Martha had a wonderful tea for us that night ; and it was wonderful to sit down to it, and eat and drink, as if we had not seen into the depths, and felt the awful touch of the powers of the air, and been almost out of the body and face to face with God.

Yet we were left to live here on this earth, and not a hair of our heads had been breathed upon, and quiet days were to be again for us, — great sunrises and glorious sunsets, with no terror in their flames ; and bread was to be sweet and needful, and fruits juicy, and common living among friends pleasant, as it had been, in old, small, simple ways.

To see Martha bring the little old, black teapot in, to fill up the tall china one, made me feel braver again, I knew not how. It was the reassurance that there could still be little black teapots, and things like them, and the use of them, in the world. The same world where there were lightning-drawing rocks, and tempests, and great clouds coming down, and fire rushing from the heavens forked with destruction.

Teas and breakfasts and dinners and peaceful nights of sleep, and household work, and farming in the fields, always, everywhere ; storms here and there only, and once in a while.

I was quite happy again by bedtime. Very happy when Richard stopped me at the stairfoot, behind the others, though he had said good-night before.

“ I could not help — *that* — Anstiss ; when I first came, you know. It was just as if I had found you on the other side of the grave. I don’t count it as any difference — yet — unless — ”

“ It *is* yet, — it *is* unless ! ” I answered him low, hurriedly, impetuously. “ Richard, there will never be anybody like you ! ”

I thought only of his strong, beautiful, sure love. I must have it about me in my life. I could not turn and go away from it again. Had not God sent it ? Put it before me, once, twice, always ? Had he given me anything else ? Did this mean nothing of his will ?

“ Anstiss ! — Come back a minute, Anstiss ! ”

I turned to go back with him.

"No! No!" he said, then, in his strong, generous way.
"It shall all be till morning. Good-night — Nansie!"

He did not kiss me, though we were left all alone. He did not even take me in his arms again. He would not claim me. He would not take advantage of the strange excitement and impulse of the night.

Would any other than Richard Hathaway ever have done so?
Might I not love this man?

It was a strange night to me. Twice in my life I have passed other such nights, when a great peace has come after a deep agony of experience.

I do not know which were the greater rests, — the sleepings or the wakings. They alternated all night long.

The hush and the sweetness after the storm; the tame little night-winds breathing in at the windows; the gleam of the far-up stars. The wideness of the safety and the mere point of havoc and harm. The being *back again*; from glimpse and possibility and terrible nearness of doom. I rested in these with untold, unsated content. I rested in the human love beside me; ready to be close beside me through all. God forgive me if this were all selfishness. I thought it was thankfulness and peace.

In the morning Miss Remember was herself again. She must go back to the Ledges.

"All creation will be there, you see, as soon as it gets round. And it's pretty well round by this time. It'll be wuss'n lightning if I aint there. Submit, you and I'll go along. The girls can stay if they like; and if they think they can get over it better here than there. But I'm for marching right up to a thing, when it's got to be met and seen to."

So Submit and Remember went along.

Hope sat with Lodemy and Frasie, after the early morning work was done, out by the open hall door, where the air came by, keen and bright, from the north-west hills, "swept crystal clear," and the little slant of sunshine at their feet, beneath the trees, was pleasant.

Hope took up the task of soothing poor Miss Frasie. It

was needful ; for there was real danger in the shattering of her nerves and spirits.

The real and the ideal, which she had lived in so curiously together, seemed jumbled in her mind into one loss and confusion and pain.

"I'd got it all kind of regular and nice, you know ; I knew just where everything was. Now, I don't know whether there's anything. Or ever was. Do you think it was a *judgment*, Hope? Was it graven images?"

"Don't you see, dear Miss Frasie, that the very things the storm *could not* touch, were the things you loved so? It was only the signs of them that could be torn down. Your little vines and strings and wires were only little marks put in to keep the place, and make it seem more real ; but they were the *least* real things. Why, if it had all been built in timber, *that* wouldn't have been the real part. It isn't the real part of any houses. Lightning can't strike the *inside*. The signs of us, ourselves, aren't the real part of us, even. Why, it all goes together, and there is just one comfort in it. 'For we know, if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' — I never saw *that* before ! It has just come !"

"Why, I don't much believe it would be wicked," Hope went on, "to take those other words for such a meaning, partly : 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through nor steal.' I think God gave it to you, dear Miss Frasie, within ; what he did not see good to give you without ; I think it is the beginning of what is laid up for you from the foundation ; just as we give little children a taste, you know, and put the rest away. It isn't struck nor burned ; it's *there*!"

Nobody but Hope could have comforted her so. I think Hope saved her "faculties," which Miss Remember was afraid would go.

Richard came to me, very directly and simply, and asked me if I would walk down the Pine Lane with him.

The Pine Lane — really a glorious avenue — ran down be-

hind the orchard, skirting the Great Mowing, and ended in deep woods. It had begun with a cart-path, I suppose, up which they brought in their logs cut in the "Back Lot." Generations ago, the pine-trees had been left standing—some even planted in—on each side, as the fields were cleared; and now, down to the piece of old forest whence they still cut all their winter supplies, it was one broad, shaded pathway, deeply carpeted with soft brown needles.

It was like the aisle of a cathedral. I walked down by Richard's side, as I might have walked down a church to an altar. I knew we should come back from that walk no more two, but one.

We came out of the deep, sweet-smelling shade upon a knoll that lay against the woods. Light broke in here. It was like an open chancel,—a great shrine,—with the Presence shining from above, as it came down between the cherubim.

The forest around us gathered gradually. Its border was of light growth; birches and alders edged it like a fringe. We looked into quiet nooks, and down the openings of little footpaths, across which squirrels ran, and within which were nests of many little birds.

We sat there all alone with God and his beauty.

"It is a good place to come to after yesterday," said Richard.

I felt its calmness and sweetness good, as he knew they would be for me. Richard was a providence for me, always.

We rested there, silently; till our whole souls and bodies were full, in every thought and sense, of the rich and beautiful peace.

"This is *your* lane, Anstiss," said Richard, by and by. "We've never been here many times together; and yet you've been with me always."

After that there was a silence between us for a while.

"Every bit of the farm is yours in that way," he began again. "You can't help it, whether you take it or not."

"Please don't talk about *taking*, Richard. It is all taking, with me. All giving, with you."

"Will you take me, Anstiss?"

Even then he asked me to give him nothing; only that he might be allowed to give.

It must have been meant to be.

I turned round and put my two hands in his. Then I dropped my face upon them, and cried.

Richard drew me up, and took me into his arms.

"I will make you as happy as the day is long," he said, slowly, and sweetly, and solemnly.

He did not tell me, like other men, that I had made *him* happy. He gave himself, utterly, like God.

How mean I feel myself, remembering and writing this!

It is not good to receive all. God himself knows that, requiring us to give back, even to him.

But I was very restfully, thankfully, happy.

I could do no otherwise. This love was put for me, and I could no longer do without it. God knew. I know this day, that he did know.

The morning grew sweeter and sweeter, in the sunniness after the rain. We stayed there a long time.

Then we came up, through the pines, into the world again.

We had to go home before dinner, Hope and I. Aunt Ildy would think it strange if we did not, although a message had been sent to her last night, and she knew that we were safe, and where.

Richard drove us in. Jabez was to come into the town, and bring him back.

Martha stared at Richard's goings on, and goings off to-day.

"He hasn't laid a finger to the farm," she said. "The men are just chalking out for themselves, as they please. Taint his way. The thunder's turned everything, I think, besides the milk!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANSTISS HATHAWAY.

I WENT straight up to Aunt Ildy. She was in her room, darning some cap-laces.

I forgot, for the moment, all about the lightning. That was the event before the last. It was to-day's news, not yesterday's, that I had upon heart and lip.

"Aunt Ildy," I said, "Richard and I have made up our minds."

Dead silence.

What turn could any displeasure have taken, to equal that?

She did not even lift her eyes. I saw a certain start of astonishment, however, under the skin, as it were ; and then the determination that set the lips and kept the eyelids down. Something was not right about it ; but what could I do next ? I stood and waited.

I could not tell her over again. I could not enlarge, or tell more. Neither could I go away without answer or notice. I wondered how long it would last, and whether she could bear it out longer than I could. I think I stood still there, before her, for about three minutes. It seemed five times as long.

"Well?" she said, at length, lifting her eyes severely, as if simply wondering what I waited for.

"You heard what I said, aunt?"

She waited again.

"About Richard and me? We have decided it."

"Umph! Very well. Then I suppose it *is* decided."

Her eyes went down again.

"Richard is downstairs, aunt."

"He can't want *me*. There seems to be no reference to me in the case."

She looked, for outraged dignity, like nothing less than the United States government in a moment of defied authority or disregarded claim.

"It used to be the fashion to consult fathers, or mothers, or somebody, before things were decided."

"Why, auntie, of course he wants to see you. But I came to tell you first, myself."

Receiving no answer, and utterly at a loss as to whether she would appear and welcome him or not, I had to go away downstairs again to Richard.

He was in the little sitting-room, that was closed, green and cool, against the August heat. Hope had gone to Lucretia in the kitchen, and presently I heard her pass upstairs, to Aunt Ildy. Then there were questions, and answers, and talk, fast enough. Hope was recounting, I knew, our experience at the Ledges.

I sat down by Richard, on the hair-cloth sofa in the corner. I was more sure than ever that he was my refuge and rest. What should I have done if it had been any other than Richard? He knew Aunt Ildy's ways.

"You must manage it with Aunt Ildy," I said to him. "I've been unlucky, and begun at the wrong end with her."

I laughed as I said it; and then I cried a little. I could not help it; it seemed hard to me, in this great moment of my life, to miss — to want — I knew not what. I know now. It was mother-love. That which I had missed all my life; missed it so long, that half the time I knew not now what it was I did miss. I looked for bread, and I had got a stone.

Yet Aunt Ildy — I would not forget it — could be, had been, very kind. There was love in her heart, deep down; sister-love, aunt-love, — her variety of it, — I suppose, too. There are all sorts and ways of aunt-love; of mother-love there is but one.

Perhaps Hope did it; perhaps Aunt Ildy meant it all the while; but she came down after a time, and spoke to Richard

very civilly. As soon as I could, I got away, and carried my bonnet upstairs.

When I came back, she was doing everything proper and handsome. A tray, with plates and cake and wine, as suitable observance, stood waiting on the table ; upon my return, at a look from Aunt Ildy, Hope handed it round. She came first to me ; I broke a corner off a rich slice of the sacred compound, and took in my fingers one of the little low, round, old-fashioned glasses, with a feeling of guilt at being of so much importance. But I was happy ; I knew that Richard must have made all right.

Aunt Ildy had been, for a moment, like one of our modern street-cars, slipped off her track ; she had been hoisted on again, and could proceed comfortably now upon the propriety-grade.

After the little state luncheon, Richard stayed on, till it was time for dinner, which he ate with us, without more ado.

Uncle Royle came in, with some speciality in his manner ; he had on a fresh, white-frilled shirt ; Aunt Ildy had had him upstairs. She, too, had put on rather a festival cap.

Uncle Royle shook hands, with a particular kindness and dignity, with Richard. It was the right hand of family fellowship ; now it was all over for the present ; we could take things naturally.

I was glad to talk about the storm, and the Polisher girls. I wondered what people did who were engaged, who had nothing happen to them, at the time, but the engagement. I thought an earthquake must be a gentle relief.

After all, it was a white, pleasant day in my life. I did not like being made much of at the moment ; because I was so ill-used to it, and have always felt it such a misdemeanor ; but I was glad to remember it at night, and I was very grateful.

I was terribly afraid, however, of all the trouble I should have to make for Aunt Ildy before she had done with me. I wished I were married, and it were all well over.

Hope went, in a day or two, for a regular visit at the Polisher girlses. It was her own thought. They were old, and timid, she said, and were in such dread of more storms. They

had so much to do, too ; they ought not to be all by themselves, just for a while.

Hope seemed very still, somehow, since these happenings. She was heart-glad — we knew that — that it was all right between us ; it was easy to see Hope's gladness, or her pain. She was glad, satisfied ; but somehow she slid away into a retired tranquillity of her own. She was busy and cheerful, always doing, but softly, as if she were almost afraid of wakening something. Only that her manner was so sweet, and her whole self so mindful of nothing that was not pretty and poetical, she made me think, curiously, of a most homely thing, — of Aunt Ildy's way when she was threatened with a spasm of hiccough. Right wherever she was, at the first symptom, she would lay hold of something, grip hard, will hard, and breathe calm and slow. If she could get over the first minute or two, all was well ; the paroxysm would never come ; but if it once got the better of her, she had a suffering time. Hope seemed almost to keep her breath under, as if some soul-spasm, which she would not have, for the moment threatened her. Whether it were a fear and nervousness excited in her, as in us, by the storm and its horrors, or a dread of dreading, that was upon her, and she thus put by, I do not know ; she seemed to put by something ; and, whatever it was, I think it never held her. She rose more thoroughly and clear from the influence of that time than I have ever done.

She helped the Polisher girls through with all their labors of renovation ; she realized many little idealities of home-adornment for them ; she put a new, fresh face on much that replaced what else might have been unpleasant in its reminder and association ; she left them cheerful, and she came home blithe.

I was to be married in October ; there was nothing to wait for. Nothing but my outfitting, which was all to be done.

Hope and I sat day after day by the windows in Aunt Ildy's room, with the big band-basket full of prepared work between us, and stitched away busily.

All the makings of the household were set on foot and mostly accomplished in Aunt Ildy's room ; everything was

cut out on her large bed. She herself, when she was not cutting out, sat in her rocking-chair by the chimney ; in the summer-time she put her spools and scissors on the little ledge under the mantel ; in the winter she ranged them on the broad corners of the Franklin stove.

I remembered the days of Margaret Edgell and her bridehood. I thought of the things I meant then to have if ever I were a bride ; of my determination to be married in church and wear a veil.

It was curious how much I gave up as unimportant, or as not worth insisting on, now that the time had come. One after another, by Aunt Ildy's decisions, or my own silence concerning them, they were dropped out of the catalogue of conditions and furnishings ; till the poetry of my bridal surroundings was very nearly all shorn away, and only a very substantial and prosaic provision remained.

Plenty of good towels and tablecloths, sheets and pillow-cases, for I must not go empty-handed of these to the Farm, though Richard was a householder already. Two good, useful, dark silks, and two merinos, were my winter dresses ; a double set of all under-garments, with extra frillings and edgings ; two calicoes, for morning wear ; a broché shawl for the autumn, and a purple thibet cloth pelisse, bound with silk, for the winter ; after I had got all these, I was ashamed to ask for white silk and tulle for wedding array. I was ashamed to seem to take to myself any central importance ; to intimate that *my* being married could be the beautiful and absorbing thing that it was for other people ; a thing to look at and to talk about. I never breathed a word about the veil ; I made up my mind to be married with flowers in my hair.

Aunt Ildy bought me a fawn-colored silk, very pale and delicate, and broad thread-lace for bosom and sleeves ; these she said would always be useful ; the silk would turn, and then color. I was so overwhelmed by her thought for me, and her real liberality, that I uttered no word of preference for maiden white.

Yet it was all just as it had been years ago ; the window

was high ; there was a wall in the way ; things were to be acquiesced in, and made to do.

I let my fancies drop ; I accepted the prose yet once more. Behind and beyond were the fact of Richard's love, and the poetry of the new life that was to be for me.

The Grandon Copes came home late in September. The house at South Side was full ; Laura and Kitty were both to be married in the spring.

Augusta came directly to see me on her return ; she was very well satisfied with my marriage.

"Mr. Hathaway is such a strong, genuine man," she said. "He is sure to go steadily on in the world. Grandon has the highest opinion of him, and of his influence in the neighborhood. You'll have such a nice home, too, Nannie ; just what you like best about you. And it will be so nice to come there in the summer-times and take little teas with you. I am glad your wedding is to be at once ; later I couldn't have been with you ; and by January we shall be in Washington."

And then she gave me her wedding gift,— a delicate, superb, thread-lace scarf.

"It can be a veil, you know, if you will do me the pleasure of wearing it so, and afterward a scarf, or anything, in fact. Thread-lace is always 'handy to have in the house,' as my dressmaker said to me once, when I couldn't quite so well afford it, and she had made me get a yard too much at eight dollars the yard."

She approved of my wedding dress. "It was sunshiny," she said. "Just the same pale sort of sunshine that I had in my hair."

It would be lovely now, indeed, with her exquisite, magnificent addition. It was Augusta's wonderful tact once more. She had either divined from her knowledge of Aunt Ildy, or found out from Hope, that my wedding dress was to be handsome and sensible only ; she threw the bridal grace over it, transforming it into summer-sunshine and fleecy cloud. Without interference, either ; it was a gift for afterward ; Aunt Ildy saw especially the judiciousness of that ; only she should

feel it a compliment if I changed my mind about a veil, and wore it at my wedding.

She came down on the bright October morning, early, to lay its frosted mist over my hair, and fasten it with flowers ; tuberoses and jessamine, and cool, glossy, deep-green leaves, with sprays of delicate vines falling and wandering away, among its transparent folds.

It was strange how it should always fall to her to give my life whatever touch of outer grace it got ; she came in like a fairy godmother, laying gifts and spells upon me.

She put my very choice and fate in her own new lights, by her ways of setting forth. She could always put things in such light and aspect as she would.

She made my home and future complementary to her own ; the Farm over against South Side. She rounded the picture, showed it in related parts, covering it with beauty and pleasantness.

She could have me now, again, more than ever. Marriage would bring me into her sympathies. Marriage settled everything ; after that, people could understand and go on.

I was married in the forenoon, in the stiff front parlor that was hardly ever used, with its three windows looking on the street. But Hope and Mrs. Grandon Cope had made it beautiful with flowers, and had persuaded Aunt Ildy to put up fresh, simple white muslin curtains ; and they had looped back these with leaves and vines, and set the blinds aslant, by some ingenious device, so that the autumn sunshine just crept in across a pleasant shade.

I did not hear a word the minister said. I wondered, as he ended, if I could be truly married, the solemn sentences had gone over me so. I almost wanted to cry out that I had not heard—I had not thought ; to bid him say them over again.

But they said I was married. Richard was by my side ; the strong clasp of his hand when he had made the promise was warm about mine still ; they came up and kissed me, and congratulated, and called me Mrs. Hathaway.

Then I had to cut the cake, and to have the first piece ; and

whether I ate it, or what became of it, or what it was like, I do not know.

There was more talk, more calling me by that new, strange name, a moving and changing of groups, a pleasantness and laughing, good-bys that seemed to come close upon the greetings, a thinning of the room, a driving off of some carriages; and then Richard asked me if I were ready to go home.

There had only been cake and wine and fruit at the wedding; Richard had insisted upon the dinner being at the Farm. Aunt Ildy and Uncle Royle and Hope were to accompany me to my new home, and see me installed there, and then drive home quietly in the twilight.

So Richard put me, in my sunshiny silk and my white gloves, with the soft, light lace upon my hair, into the carriage,—the state carriage of New Oxford, which bore brides to their homes, and mourners to the graves,—and we went out, in the bright October noon, over the same pleasant country road we had traversed hundreds of times before, yet every step of which was new to-day. For it was the beginning of our life-path together.

I was a bride; the bridal veil was over my head; it was my husband by my side. The little children had stood at the top of the lane to see us pass.

Was this the long romance that Margaret Edgell's bridal day had seemed? After all, it was more like something in the way; it was strange, and short; an interruption half comprehended, a ceremony half entered into, between the dear, old, life-grown, confiding love and need, and the coming new and nearer life,—the life that was to prove our souls; that was to be all there was for our two human hearts between this day and the grave.

Home had not yet begun. It was high festival, sitting there at the head of Richard's table, in my wedding dress, while Martha waited.

She had put her pride into the wedding dinner, the good Martha; if I had been some strange, splendid lady, come from a far place, she could not have given me more careful honor. The honor that lay upon me was the being Richard's

wife. Any woman whom he had brought there would have been the same; and I, whom she had seen all my life, was new and strange to her this day; to be treated with a strangerly deference. I was Mrs. Hathaway.

I think, at the same time, that it was not I whom she had always wanted in that name and place. Yet Richard had wanted me, and I had come. That was enough.

We walked up the Long Orchard after dinner. It was beautiful, in the shade of the broad arcades, with the fruit-ripeness among the branches and at our feet. It was beautiful away off over the hills, where the rest lay. The hidden brook sang in the autumn stillness.

We sat on a rustic bench that Richard had put there lately. Aunt Ildy made me take up my dress carefully. I felt queerly, as if I were out visiting in some strange way with her; to go back again with her when the day was over; above all, that I was responsible to her if any harm befell my unwontedly rich attire. She was really quite splendid in her black silk and her old English thread laces.

I cannot remember what we talked about. It was a strange, dreamy, unreal day.

After they had gone,—while they were going, and Richard helping them off,—I slipped away to Martha.

“Where are my trunks? Come help me, quick!”

And running upstairs with her, I unlocked, not the large, new one, which held Mrs. Hathaway’s things,—the unworn wardrobe,—but a little one, in which were gowns of Anstiss Dolbeare’s.

I chose a plain delaine; and I pulled out of a box some soft, deep-blue ribbons. I ran away with these to the little room that had been mine in my stays at the Farm, shut myself in, took off my dress and veil, remembering, even then, with the fear of Aunt Ildy before my accustomed eyes, to shake out the silken breadths carefully across the bed, and to fold the costly lace beside it; and then, in a minute, I was Anstiss Dolbeare again, in my quiet brown, tying blue ribbons in my hair and at my throat.

Of course Richard was looking for me. I listened at the

door, and heard his step in the hall. I waited till he turned, and then ran lightly and swiftly, came up behind him, and laid my hand in his as he stood in the doorway.

“ My little Nansie ! ”

How tenderly he took me ! . How glad, how gratefully, he looked at me !

“ My little wife,—in her brown dress ! ”

“ I wanted to get *home*, Richard. I have a good mind to go and make short-cake for tea.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

UP THE RIVER.

"WE are going our bridal trip to-day, Nansie," Richard said to me, standing with me on the broad door-stone, in the October morning sunshine.

It was the morning after our marriage.

Red Hill was scarlet and brown, and golden, and evergreen, before us. The elms were dropping amber in the door-yard. In the sunshine and the air together, were rich, sweet smells of autumn. It would be a day of life and glory, with a warm, delicious heart of noon.

"I am going to take you where you have never been."

He could take me nowhere in the world, that day, where I had ever been before. It was all new. "The evening and the morning were the first day."

He and Martha managed it. I knew nothing of what went into the covered basket, or of who carried it away, or whither. Richard's hands and arms were free for me when we set off together, walking up through the corner of the Long Orchard, and so out into the Pine Lane.

All down the avenue it was green and still as ever. Summer was shut in here, saying her last, sweet prayers, while autumn blazed triumphant on the hills.

We came out on the knoll. Down in the little evergreen coverts burned fires of beauty. Vines trailed in crimson light. Common little shrubs stood up, royally, turned into pyramids and globes of gold. Underneath were white and purple stars, shining everywhere. The beds of wild aster were filled with bloom. The barberries were hung with coral. The bittersweet had burst all its tawny husks, and showed its bright vermilion beads.

The year had on its diadem for this our bridal time, and all up and down its robe were jewels. The breath of a perfected blessing was abroad.

Richard did not say this, or any poetry, to me, as we sat there. He was a silent man. He was only very loving and very happy ; and he had taken me out into this perfect day, to keep it where it was the brightest. The fine instinct and the joy were in him ; at that moment I could do without the words.

We walked on, down one of the little, mysterious paths that branched into the woods. It wound, and wound, by moss and stone, and stump, and springing water. It was carpeted with pine needles sometimes, and sometimes with the fallen splendors of the maple, and was sometimes green on either hand with the late-growing ferns. It came out at last beside the river. We were two miles, and more, from home ; yet all this lovely woodland, down to the river brink, was part of Hathaway Farm. It had been larger yet ; the largest farm in all that county ; but much of John's part had been sold. For the rest, and for his sister's, Richard was still paying a rent ; but he had bought in many of Mrs. Kingsdon's acres, and he hoped to own the whole, in years to come, and keep it in the name.

I did not see what he had brought me for, till we had come close down. Down to where a low river-wall was built against the bank, and long willow branches bent over and dipped into a sheltered cove.

A little boat—dark green, with stripe of white, her oars dark-bladed, then freshly white up to the rowlocks, then dark again for handling—lay moored against the rocks.

“That is your wedding present, Nansie.”

There had been an old, leaky boat upon the river, in which the boys and men went fishing, or up after lilies ; but for years past nothing fit for pleasure-rowing. It was a good way from home, and the Hathaways were busy people who mostly took their pleasures as they came, among their work ; like melon vines in cornfields.

“But now,” said Richard, “we'll make holidays here.”

He put me in at the stern, spreading my shawl for me. The covered basket was between the seats.

How deep and dark the water was, under the banks ! How still and smooth it ran, even out in the middle current where the sun glanced down, and the oars tossed up sparkles !

We floated out, out of the very world, into a strange stillness, and up a wondrous opening avenue of glory. In all my life I had never been on the river in such a little boat before.

That singularly dark water — the bed of the river here was a deep, black mud — threw up marvellous reflections ; and all the October splendor was heaped and showered upon its shores.

Sumachs thrust their lances of flame out from under the brown alders ; woodbines flung their crimson draperies over the dark, heavy cedars ; willows bent and dipped their yellow wreaths ; on the rocks were many-shaded mosses, purple, and gray, and madder ; coarse river-grasses kept their green, springing and swaying over in full curves from their dark hussocks ; the magnificent beds of the pickerel-weed, with their great calla-shaped leaves, heaped themselves luxuriantly still.

Down in the underworld of water, all was clear and perfect as in the air. There were garlands, and stars, and globes, and arches ; grottoes and aisles ; roofs, pavements, and pillars, resplendent with living gems. Everything completed itself, and showed how only half was ever on the earth. The little islets were like green planets, perfect in beautiful space. Irregular, lichenized rocks, duplicated, spread glorious wings, like shapes of life. Sometimes, when a wave was made in rowing, Richard would lift his oars and pause, to see it spread and break, shattering all this splendor into quivering, pulsing circles, that trembled up and up, shifting and undulating, melting and changing, magnifying and diminishing, like a world broken up in a kaleidoscope.

What a wedding journey it was ! Away from everything, yet having everything, in a wondrous glory, to ourselves.

Did Richard know it all ? All that he was bringing me to ?

All along the same, yet endlessly different. The same

burning letters, in ever new words and lines. The same light above, the same depth below.

Bend after bend; vista after vista; rounded curves, that seemed to make an end; then fresh outlet and onlet, deeper and deeper into the stillness and the beauty; a long poem, with ever-recurring refrain.

"God must mean it very much," I said, thinking it out aloud.

"What?" asked Richard.

"What he says in colors. He puts them everywhere, and over and over."

Richard was silent then, as he always was when I grew mystical. It was a long, long time since I had been mystical with him before. Or even very often, with myself. Life had put its plain, hard, practical things upon me in these last past times. With the beginning of my new life sprang up again within me this interior impulse that could lie dormant long, and still be vital. It was strange how *color* touched it, always.

Richard was silent; not avertedly; he was simply not outwardly responsive. I was disappointed. I did so want him to read and interpret with me.

I went on thinking, all alone.

"It is in the heavens and the earth; and in the heaven beyond the earth. It is the wall of the New Jernusalem; the mystery that outlines and reveals the City, and that also, until we attain to it, holds us out. It dips down and touches all things with its light. But the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

My heart swelled with great longing and dim apprehension; with a sense of holy things to be revealed and brought close; of the will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and the glory made complete, as here the beauty in the water answered to the beauty above.

God's finger touched the world, writing his signs upon it. His finger also touched our lives, stirring their love into beauty. We must go reading and learning through all the years. Must we not read together?

I laid my hand on Richard's, as he rested on his oars. He took them in, drew me beside him, and put his arm about me. We floated idly, in the beautiful shade and stillness, dropping back a little in the river-current.

"We must be married in the spirit, Richard," I whispered, resting in his strong, loving hold.

"I am married to you, Anstiss, through and through; every thought and fibre of me."

I was happy; but there was something not quite satisfied. Would he not take me into the deep places of his life? Would he not care for the depths of mine?

THE SILENT SIDE.

Richard rowed up the still river, with the glory on either hand. Before him was the face of Anstiss; pure, peaceful, thoughtful.

It was as if through his life flowed just such a river; hushed, shut in; away from the world.

Secluded between deep banks; up above were the dust and hurry and toil of high roads and field-faring men; here it was holy holiday, always. But the river could not pour itself forth, running out into life on every hand; it must hold its silent way, growing by that which should be continually poured in.

Down, far down, shone the glory of the heaven and the beauty of the earth; true in its true profound; but none could enter under their arches, into the far-reaching aisles, or, putting forth a hand, grasp and bring back the golden branches. Thought and beauty were in him like this. A touch resolved them into shadows; only fact stood fast, and might be measured and handled and talked about.

The river of his heart was full of answering blessedness, this day; of rounded, perfect pictures, half a dream; which half he could hardly say. He felt its far-off springs away up in the mountain places of being, where souls are solemnly alone;

where the beginnings of life are born, and continually renewed, beside the throne of God.

He knew not why the river hushed him so ; where were the awe, and the tenderness, and the close, beautiful withdrawal, and the bosom-holding of great Love.

He only knew that it had been so to him many times before, alone ; that it was doubly, dearly so to-day, as he felt beforehand that it should be.

"I saved it up for her all this time. I was jealous of it for her. I should never have brought her here, unless — But it had to be some time, as it is to-day. I must have had her here.

"'In the midst there is a River ;' there, where there is no more sea.

"'In the midst there is a River.'"

It repeated itself over and over in his mind ; yet he thought not about his thinking. If it had come to his lips, it would have opened a joy of thought to Anstiss ; a joy that the thought had been with him.

What did come to his lips was :—

"I should not like to live where there was not a river near. I don't believe I ever could."

"Have you been here much, Richard ?

"Yes ; I know it all. It has been like the Pine Lane, Anstiss. It is one of your places."

She longed for the deep places of his life ; to be taken into them with him. How could she not see that this was it,—her very longing ? How could she not see what it stood for with him having her here beside him ? How the untranslated signs were yet signs to his soul of what was in God's Soul also as he made them ?

"See that red oak, Anstiss ; in there among the brown, high back, in the field. It was a good thing, its getting there, among the walnuts. Somehow, things do seem to get into the right places ; it's wonderful how."

His eye ran from tint to tint ; one needed the other ; the carbuncle of the oak, and the walnut brown ; the scarlet of the creepers and the deep, sombre shadow of the evergreens ;

flame-color and tender yellow kissing each other in the maples ; the bronze of the ash, and the mellow gleam of the chestnut ; the soft blue of heaven interspacing and enfolding all. You leaned against the restful contrast ; there was asking and answering ; there were chords.

"It is like a tune in a church," he thought to himself ; but he did not say so, because he could not have told why. "You get one part, and it makes you want another. You know what must come next, though you never heard it before."

"God must mean it very much," Anstiss said then.

It was not that the word repulsed him ; but that below words his thought moved unformed. It had touched him,—the tender scale in color,—striking harmonies to the spirit, like the harmonies in sound ; prophesying and fulfilling.

Anstiss reached for the meaning ; the word that the color and the music brought. She questioned ; analyzed.

Richard hushed himself before these things, always ; he let his spirit be played upon, like Eolian harp-strings ; he knew not what it was that stirred. He let the glory touch him ; as the rainbow comes down among the tree-tops in a field, and rests its pillars on the very grass. He was content that it should shine.

It was a beautiful thing to this son of nature to be alive ; to move and breathe among these dear concordances ; he left them simply to the "goodness and the grace ;" they were, and he was glad.

He would not have quoted the Scripture, nor understood that in his heart were the words of the Christ ; yet, as Anstiss spoke, something warm within him, under his silence, recognized with a tender humbleness the continual gift.

"For the Father loveth the Son, and giveth all things into his hands."

This was what God "meant, so much," in his beautiful world. In his world where things got, wonderfully, into their right places. Where Richard and Anstiss Hathaway were face to face, this day of utter peace. Where they were to be, side by side, always, while the world should be for them. It was just His good pleasure, giving his little ones the kingdom.

"I am married to you, Anstiss, through and through.
Every thought and fibre of me."

The whole man spoke ; out of a whole, loyal heart.

Just as much a little while after, with not a word between, when he pushed the boat in under a sloping bank ; where cedars and alders, elders and willows, barberries and blackberries, with grape-vines and woodbines flung among and over all, grew as they do grow beside New England streams ; and far up into a quiet shade ran a little pathway.

"Are you hungry, Nansie ? It is time my little wifie had her dinner."

It was so dear to him that henceforth he should feed and care for her, of right and always.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOME.

I LIKED so much the little beginnings of my own house-keeping.

Annt Ildy brought over to me my mother's silver, marked with her name. I never knew about it; she had kept it for this time.

There were pretty little, old-fashioned, small-bowled tea-spoons, with scallop shells upon the handles. There was a quaint, low, long-lipped cream-boat with a high, slender loop for a handle, and there was a broad, shallow basin, in whose pure, gleaming round I delighted to turn and rinse the delicate little cups that had been Richard's mother's. I could not use it for a slop-basin. For this I kept a commoner one, behind the teapot, out of sight.

I had them all upon the breakfast table the morning after they came, with the bright, new, crimson-chequered cloth also that was among my furnishings. The silver looked so pretty on it, and the glass vase filled with white double asters, and golden, bronze-streaked nasturtiums and green leaves, was so fresh and lovely in the middle.

Richard liked my replacings. I put away nothing that he specially loved, but I made a new-married look about all with my bridal belongings.

He had had the little breakfast-room — and other rooms — repainted before I came. The wainscots in this were now of a full, creamy buff, — my favorite color. I have liked the smell of fresh paint from that time until now. It seems as if all the world were new, and every morning were the first one.

It was the holiday season of the year, upon the farms. The summer grains were gathered; the winter grains were sown;

only the apples and the root crops were being got in, and the old cider-mill was grinding clear, bright juices that we drank and gave our friends new from the vats. It was our wedding wine.

We carried some one day to Mrs. Cryke. The cider was the errand that he made, but Richard's object was to take his wife.

He made me wear my bonnet with the white ribbons, and my mazarin blue merino dress. The winds were cold now. We were in November.

For the cider we got beer, of course; and much welcome, and many thanks, and elbow-marks of admiration. Mrs. Cryke looked at us as the old and solitary do look at the young and newly married; as upon those entered into a beautiful mystery, new and separate for every pair.

"The *best* of the farm," she said, leaning forward toward Richard, and underscoring; "the *best* of the farm. You always bring me a taste of that. And now it's a sight of the little *wife*, — in the *newness*. The wife is the best of *all*, — to the *husband*, Mrs. Hathaway," — italicising with her other elbow at me, — "the best to *you* is *him*!"

How the elbows marked the pronouns and the antithesis; how they put in the dash, pausing between their sweeps either way; how the whole anatomy of the woman was alive with her earnestness, and her friendliness, and her gladness! It was good to have been married, even for a word like this.

She bent aside to me, presently, with an elbow held up behind my shoulder, as speaking with a particular privacy: —

"Did you ever read 'Sir Charles Grandison'?"

I had read it years before, sitting in dear Mrs. Hathaway's room, where the seven leather-bound volumes lay in the little book-cupboard, except as I, in my visits, brought them out, and once, when she had lent them to me for a while.

"Long ago, — yes," I answered.

"Better read it *again, now*. I've got it; *he* lent it to me. Now I'll give it back to *you*. Because, you see," she added, bringing her other elbow up before me in a still closer shelter, and leaning still more face to face into the parenthesis, — "He's — part — Grandison!"

Nothing would do but she must bring them out ; also some bottles of her beer to carry home ; and, making us promise to read the one and drink the other, faithfully, she let us go ; shouldering us out, by way of lingering, delighted demonstration ; and stood there by her door, looking after us, with her arms high akimbo, as if it were a manner of benediction.

These quiet, pleasant goings about — seeings and being seen — were our honeymoon. Two or three times Aunt Ildy and Hope came over and drank tea. Hope drew Aunt Ildy more and more into a genial living. For Hope herself life seemed just as full, as satisfying, as ever. She looked on, apparently, into no long, dull years, with Uncle Royle and Miss Chism growing older and older, the latter, perhaps, crosser and crosser ; as Lucretia said, “more kind o’ pudgicky, you know ;” she dreaded no tiresome routine ; all was glad and fresh ; every day began with a glory and ended with a peace.

Hope had no wants ; the thought of a joy was joy ; you could “see nothing that wasn’t there, — somehow.”

She entered so into the joy of our marriage. “You see it’s something you can’t keep me out of,” she said to me one day. “The goodness and the realness of anything like that go such a great way. Everybody gets some. No two people, nor no five, can keep the whole. Being married, and being born, and being converted, and coming home from a great way off after a long time, — why, they spread ! The whole town is glad, and takes thought about it. Or else, why do they all turn round in church to look at folks that have had a happening ? And this is such a right, beautiful thing !”

Hope took nothing just like other people. Not even pain, and fear. She went beyond, always.

We were talking one day, — it was linked so with this “happening” of ours, — of the thunder.

“I do not think you were half so frightened as the rest of us,” I told her. “And it didn’t seem to stay by you, — the awfulness of it, — as it did with me. It went quivering over me, — it does now, sometimes, — just as those blue lights quivered about the door-frames after the storm was past.

And while it was happening — O Hope! I wouldn't live through that again, for *any* living afterward!"

"Any living? O Anstiss! You don't know what it might be!"

There was a sort of rapt intension in Hope's face as she spoke. I remembered that a gleam of it had been across her paleness even on that day.

"You couldn't have been afraid!" I cried. "I wonder what you are made of!"

"Yes," said Hope, slowly and simply, as one recalling and examining a feeling past, "I was afraid. But I was something else, too. I think," she added, with a quiet kind of earnestness, "that I was interested."

"Interested! Hope Devine, how *do* you mean?"

"I was interested," she answered, with the same abstracted simplicity, "to see what God would do with me next."

She was always so sure that God would do something next. That her story — that no one's story — was ever all told and done.

We had Miss Bremer's lovely first book to read, that early, frosty, firelighted time, — the "Neighbors." How good it was for me! How it confirmed my certainties — showing its kindred simple, pleasant, not too poetic or romantic, pastoral and domestic life! Reading about Bear and Fanny, and the little sugar-cakes, and the cow Audumbla, and the teas on Svano, — yes, even of *ma chère mère* and her sharpnesses, — I saw such an encouraging and indorsing reflection of my own surroundings, and my own cheer! I could live in this story, as we only can in such as touch and illustrate our own. My life was as much a story — an idyl — as this. That was what enviously ratified even my honeymoon content.

And so the snows came down, and the bleakness; and Thanksgiving came and went, — our first Thanksgiving; and Christmas was near at hand; and the deep winter closed in around Broadfields and the Farm.

CHAPTER XXX.

SATISFIED?

A DAY of pain. A day in the depths. Reaching hour by hour into darkness; in a blind struggle; longing for rest; for the end; *any* end.

Then, — again, the second time in my life, — a night of infinite peace. The September moon glinting in at the blinds. Crickets singing in the sweet, dry, autumn stubble.

My baby, — soft-breathing, — my real, little, living baby, by my side.

Richard gone away, with a smile on his face, into the guest-chamber.

Mrs. Cryke sitting by the low, small fire, settling little things about it that might be wanted.

I wondered if she would tend the baby with her elbows.

No. She only talked with her elbows. She *did* everything with the quickest, lightest, tenderest fingers.

But what if she should suddenly need punctuation marks; the baby in her arms? I laughed out, gently, at the fancy.

I think she was frightened. She came to me quickly, leaning over the bed. I could see the anxious questioning in her raised elbows then.

“Nothing, — nothing,” I said. “I am only so happy.” And so I was. We laugh more out of our moods, than at the things, always.

“Well, there, don’t then, dear,” she said, soothingly. “Leave off being happy till morning.”

But I kept waking up, for nothing else than to be happy, all night long. All night long the dear little breathing was at my side.

“And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

That kept coming to me. God had begun his creation, all over again for me.

"What will Richard say in the morning?"

He had gone away so quietly; only with that kiss, and look of shining happiness upon his face.

In the morning he came in, and looked at us, very much as if he were afraid of us both.

"How is the little wife? And how is the little wife's little man?"

That was all he dared to say, or could say, somehow.

I was well enough. I would have liked to have had him say more.

[Richard Hathaway had not shut his eyes to sleep the whole night long. All night, till the day began to come, he had lain in a deep reaction of joy, mutely thanking God. Listening for any sound from his wife's hushed room. Holding back his gladness, lest he should be glad too soon, or too much. Afraid lest some terrible reversal might be even yet.

Once he stole to the door, that was ajar, and looked in. They were all still, and asleep. Then, after the cocks began to crow, he slept also, for an hour.

After he had kissed his wife and spoken to her those few words, he had gone away with tears in his eyes that no one saw.

"I suppose," Anstiss said, slowly, to herself, "men take it for granted that their babies will be born. They are glad, but they haven't been through the awfulness, the blackness; helping God find a life in the dark. Only he and women know."]

That passed by.

My brain was overstrained, even with happiness; and when it rested, my soul rested, and I saw more rightly. I lay in the peace of my guarded room, shut up to the luxury of thought, and blessed, continual, new possession. I rested in Richard's tenderness, shown in every watchful care, shining down upon me and my baby in that deep, wistful look of his eyes, so

gentle for a man, so brimming with what came to eyes only, or lay upon lips unbent, half moved with undelivered words.

Richard loved me with all that love. I knew it. Was I not content? Or why?

If only loving me so, he could lay his strong hand on mine and lift me up! Lift me, always, up, and up, into the light!

If he did not stop right there, in just his happy tenderness, most like a woman's—almost like a child's. If there were only a grand high wisdom with it, overshadowing me, reflecting to me God's Face! If he could always go up into the mount for me, and bring me down the word, the answer!

Why did I demand all this? Why was only one side of me happy and full content? Why should I have more than other women?

I lay and let myself be blessed with that which came. I was blessed then. I would not let myself look at that shut-down longing.

The September days were beautiful. The sounds that crept into my blinded room were sublimated sounds. The creak of the wagons, the voices of the farm-men as they came and went, the low, motherly cluck of hens, the flutter of pigeons coming down for crumbs to Martha's door,—these were sounds of heaven, touching upon the calm wherein I lay, a woman who had brought a life from God into the world. I had been close to heaven. Its airs came back with me. I heard as the angels hear.

Shadows flickered in upon the white ceiling; shadows of glorified life; the noise, the dust, the ache and tire, discharged; only the beautiful spirit left, as it sifted through upon my rest.

Mrs. Cryke was a minister of grace, wings and all; for there were plumes upon her elbows to me, as she carried them. She held them over my boy while he lay upon her lap, fresh bathed and robed, shielded lightly with soft flannels. She hovered over him with caressing touches upon tiny lips and chin, her face beaming and bowing upon him, between outspread wings, like a cherub's.

Mrs. Cryke could do everything. Was that why the super-

fluous, anticipative energy flowed out so at those upper joints, before it came down to her hands? Was there an instinct of fingers there? Or was it the beginning of wings?

She had come to me because the nurse I had engaged was taken ill, and I had needed her sooner than I thought. She stayed because we liked her so. Her cat, Solomon, kept house for her, but I am pretty sure that Richard and Putterkoo got round there every day or two, not unaccompanied with what Solomon received as "the best of the farm."

There was in Mrs. Cryke her own individual streak of the abounding New England quaintness. She amused me hourly with her sayings, — the aptness and suggestiveness of them.

The second day after my baby was born, she went to a press not constantly used, in my room. I remembered that the morning of my illness it stood open, left so after some hurried bringing out of something that was wanted. I remembered lying and looking at the door ajar, in lulls of suffering, with a half-delirious feeling that the agony was behind it and would come forth upon me again.

It had been a warm noon-tide. The air was summer-hot; but at night it changed, and since then, mountain winds had shaken their sparkles through all the atmosphere and made it keenly bright.

"I declare to *Moses!*" she exclaimed, in an undertone, to herself. "If here isn't *day before yesterday* shut up in this 'ere clusset!"

"Don't, for the sake of all the children of Israel, let it out, then, Mrs. Cryke," I cried in answer, laughing, from the bed.

"Massytoous! did you hear? I haven't gone and stirred you up?" And she elbowed toward me. "You aint to laugh before this time next week — not a *mite!*" she said, solemnly, enforcing the solemnity by a sweep that seemed to gather up the time she spoke of, and to thrust the days behind her.

"Now, I'll do the talking, and the laughing, too — all that's good for you — if you'll hold still. I and the little *king!*" And she turned to hover over the cradle, where a small nestling and a little meditation of a cry began.

"As for the *yesterdays*, young general, — the days when you *wasn't*, — they'll never be *again*, you know; and you'll never know how to believe they *have* been. This is the Year *One* for you! But they're put away, and more or less of 'em is shet up *somewheres*. They aint always pleasant to let out, that's a fact! But *to-day* is always big enough to freshen 'em."

Mrs. Cryke and Martha got on, also, in the loveliest way, together. The elbows had always some new admiration marks for doings downstairs; there was always some cheery story to tell of the pleasantness and comfort kept there.

"She's in the cider-süller, now," was the bulletin one day. "Precisely in her *aliment*. A muck of dirt and cobwebs behind where the empty barrels stood." The elbow went round behind her, here, and indicated the dark corner. "Martha says she hates dirt; but she don't, unless it's with a kind of *lovin'* hatred. She wouldn't know what to do without it. She loves it as the Lord loves a sinful heart; for the blessedness of making it clean again! No *sin*, no *salvation*."

She told me I had "just everything, and *one to carry*," to make me contented. "House, and farm, and husband, and girl, and now this little *Speaker-of-the-House-of-Representatives!*" She had a new name for him every hour.

"I am contented, and thankful," I said. I spoke truly. I went further, and spoke more truly yet. "But I'm not *satisfied*. I don't suppose anybody is."

"They are if they don't expect too much just where they can lay their finger on it. It's *all round*. You can't get the Lord God all in one piece, *anywhere*. He had to make the *heavens* and the *earth*, and all that in them is, for *that*. You must take your pieces as he gives 'em out, one at a time!"

Her elbows circled, indicatively, great horizons, speaking of the Lord God, and the heavens and the earth through which he comes down to souls, and a quick jerk — a home-thrust — pointed her personal application.

They were given to me, — those words of hers, — characterized and impressed upon me by her oddities, — to be laid up among the "*yesterdays*;" to come forth when their hour

should be. They did me good then ; but I had to live on, and find out. They waited, as the Bible waits for us.

“*Satisfied!*” she broke out again, afterwards. “I don’t know as we’re anywherees *commanded* to be satisfied. We’re to be *content*, and *patient*; it’s the *prommuss* that says ‘satisfied !’—Napoleon Bonaparte’s beginning to squirm down there out of sight. I guess he’s about ready to be dug up.”

And she fairly paddled, with elbows outheld and quivering, toward the cradle.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SILENT SIDE.

AS WELL AS HE KNEW HOW.

"I suppose it's as much as loving ever comes to, in this world,—living alongside.

"I wonder if it was a mean thing of me to take her. I wonder if she'd have found more in somebody else; or whether somebody else would never have come; or, supposing he had, if it would have turned out the same. The same for her as it is now for me,—living alongside.

"It's enough for me to be by her. To know that the same things will happen to both of us; that we can't run apart and lose each other, in all this world.

"Do they, though? The same things? It don't hardly seem so. 'Two grinding in one mill. Two in the same field. Two sleeping in one bed. One taken, the other left.'—Where,—yes, where, Lord?"

There was a long time, then, that he sat, unthinking. Not shaping his thought, as these had been shaped. Just looking at it in a blind mental stare. Looking at this life of his; the riddle that it was; that it was growing more and more to be.

"Five years ago, to-day.

"He'd have been a nice little boy. Talking and asking questions. Learning to read, perhaps. Saying little hymns Sundays, to his mother, as I said them to mine. Maybe he says them to *her*, now.—Mother! Little Richie! Little, *little*. Richie!"

The man's hand was clenched hard as it pressed his cheek leaning on it. It was the love that grasped for his boy; the

sign of the thought that held him so fast. It was like the mother's holding tightly to her heart, with sobs, the little shoes, the little nightgown,—any little thing that had had him in it,—if she opened now and then some drawer where such things lay. Men do not go and do that, often. But something elutches and wrings,—holds close and fast,—when the thought comes that is like a tiny presence. They do not tell women of these moments, either. They get over them alone. Women need not be reminded. Let things sleep, if they will.

Anstiss came up behind him.

"It is five years to-day, Richard," she said, as if he had occasion to be told.

"I know it, dear. I was just thinking of it. Just thinking what a nice little boy he would have been."

He put his hand up and took hers that lay upon his shoulder.

"Give me something!" she cried; imperatively, impetuously. "It is so hard to-night. I have been bearing it all day."

She wanted a word—a hope. Some man's strength, better than her own, of soul and faith, to hold her up.

"We'll go and take a ride, Nansie. You've been at home all day. You need it," he said kindly, and stood up instantly, to go and do for her.

"I'll bring Swallow round in a minute. We'll ride out over Pitch Hill."

She let him go without a word, and then stood still and uttered a sharp "Ah!" like a scream kept in to a single point.

"Pitch Hill will be no nearer heaven!"

But she went to ride. She had only that to do, unless she stood still there and shrieked it out.

And Pitch Hill *was* nearer heaven, though she might not know. For the calm sunset helped her, and the sweet air; and heaven flowed in upon her, silently, from the deep, human love yearning at her side. Out of it, though unspoken, virtue came. Nothing goes back quite void, into man's heart, any more than into God's.

Richard was cheerful ; he talked of pleasant things ; simple every-day talk it was ; he thought that would do her most good. How could she know, therefore ? How could she guess the “Where, Lord?” that had been the heart-cry of his pain, an hour ago ?

So they sat, “alongside.”

It was almost two years since the child had gone. Five, to-day, since he had been born.

They were neither of them, all the time, as they had been to-day. For the most part, they lived along, as others do ; side by side in the world, that was in so many things a pleasant world for them. One great pain had come into it, one great joy had been swallowed down into darkness ; but they did not sigh, or cry, always. It was nearly two years ago.

Settled down, as people say, to married life. Only a man settles more entirely than a woman, or he seems to do.

Richard Hathaway could not stop, often, to take his life out and look at it. Its great fact was accomplished. Out of his love-season, the time of his doubt and longing, he passed into calm certainty and every-day using of the life that had been given.

He had no such questions to ask as Anstiss had. He had wanted, with his whole heart and soul, this that he had got. If this were not pure and full happiness for him, the wide world — the threescore years and ten — did not hold it in his behalf.

For Anstiss, — for any woman, — who knew ?

Man’s nature — his part — is forthgoing, demanding. Love, that is his pursuit, comes to a woman. Shall she take this that comes ? Is this the right love ? She must begin by asking, searching herself. Perhaps, like Anstiss Hathaway, she is of a nature that keeps asking, searching ; testing life all through at every point ; testing herself. Yet, for the moments in which she thus holds her soul, palpitating, under the lens of its own scrutiny, there are days and months and years when she just goes on. You may breathe deep, however,

or you may only breathe from the top of your lungs. Very few — do any? — live from their utmost depths.

When Richard Hathaway did doubt, — did test himself, — it was to ask as he had to-day, — “Was it right by her? Could there have been anything better for her, if I had let her alone?” He who had waited, while better things seemed near her, giving them their full opportunity, asked this. Who had only loved on, as he could not help loving, until one day she took his love at last, blessing him immeasurably.

Coming now through the meadow lands homeward, below Pitch Hill, he stopped where the blue gentians grew, and went and gathered them for Anstiss.

“They can say better things than I can,” he thought, holding their delicate stems tenderly as he came back to her.

He kept the year all through with flowers, as Christians keep a year of prayers.

They did say things for him ; they told of the blooms in his heart ; they were words that satisfied her in the moments when they came.

She turned and held her face up to him for her thanks.

“You are so good, Richard!”

“I’m only as good as I know how, Nansie. That isn’t much.”

Why did he always put himself down so? Did she catch the under-thrill of his voice that would have trembled if he had not been strong? Could she feel the great tide of will and blessing that surged through him, as if he transmitted God’s own throb of tenderness for her? Did she find all that in the kiss he gave her thanks?

He went himself, when they got home, for the new milk Martha kept for her from May-Blossom’s “strippings,” lest she should forget to drink it. He stood by, smiling while she emptied the glass of its pure, rich draught. Anstiss had not been strong these last two years.

He had soothed her back, in his own ways ; they had not been just the ways she asked for ; they had been signs, not speech, — signs only of a simple, every-day love ; but they quieted

her ; she would have hated herself if she had not let them comfort her.

He went away with something bounding in his heart where his own questioning and wondering had been ; a joy that he had served her and she had smiled.

"I don't suppose that any one could quite look out for her as I can, after all. I know her little ways, and the things she needs so well.

"I don't believe she could have been better off in any new, strange life. She wants hushing and quieting down ; it wouldn't do for her to be kept on the strain.

"They say a child grows up, sometimes, with a hankering, it don't know what for ; something, perhaps, it ought to have had when it was a baby. Nansie never had any *mothering* when she was little. Nobody else would have known about that, as I do."

CHAPTER XXXII.

NANSIE'S WAYS; WHY SHOULDN'T SHE?

"It would be pretty — down at the Knoll," said Anstiss. It was summer-time again.

Richard looked round with a smile. His smile was always so full and so beautiful that she saw no unusual fulness in it now.

"Yes," he said, "and cool, too. Some of the boys can carry down things."

Anstiss waited a moment.

"You haven't any — objection?" she said, hesitatingly.

"Not a bit. It is the best thing. Have just as good a time as you can."

"That was dear of her," he thought, as she went from him into the house. — "Dear of her, to think of that. But it's all hers, as I told her long ago. Hers to do just whatever she likes with. And if she is happy there, — why, isn't that what I kept it for? I don't much believe in Mrs. Cope, though."

Anstiss did not think he noticed. Did not think he quite understood her half reluctance, and her thought that he might have the same, or more.

But the place that had been good and sweet enough to take her to for that best fulfilment of his life, was none too good to count among the things and places that should give him power to fulfil all his meaning by her, — to "make her as happy as the day was long."

With all his goods — with all his *bests* — he did endow her. There had been no beauty, no sacredness, for him, that could be less sacred and beautiful by being made most common in her service.

Walter Raleigh laid down his mantle for the feet of the

queen. Richard Hathaway laid down rich and sweet associations that had wrapped about the days and the thoughts of his solitude, desiring them to be handled, trod upon, anything,—so that they might be the richer and the sweeter and the gladder, now, since the days of his solitude were over.

It was all he could do ; it was the bread and the wine ; but the spirit and the life were the gift. We live among signs and sacraments ; by and by the books of the meanings shall be opened, and we shall see all holy things within their parables.

“ Let us come over to the Great Mowing,” Mrs. Grandon Cope had said.

She had company at South Side. She had kept Anstiss to tea one afternoon when she had driven over, and had introduced her to the Cabinet Secretary’s wife.

The Farm, through Anstiss Hathaway’s friendship, was a kind of graceful appanage of South Side. It made Mrs. Cope’s country life and sphere of sway larger, more varied in novelty, more beautiful. These people who lived in Washington three-fourths of the year found something joyously fresh and rare in this glimpse of utterly different things.

And Mrs. Hathaway of Broadfields was charming. They came to see her as they would go away into any still, wild place to see a waterfall, or find a spring that bubbled up, without waiting for fashion, in a wilderness, having a flavor and virtue that are only born in just such depths.

Augusta Cope knew better than to bring out heaps of city people to see these tired officials ; to make parties, and give dinners ; even with the fair attractions of South Side to lend a rural qualifying. She took them quite away,—except when she gave them absolute stillness and rest,—to Red Hill, or out among the Ledges ; to see Mrs. Cryke and drink beer ; or over to Hathaway Farm and “ our old friends.”

Nobody entertained with such perfect genius as Mrs. Grandon Cope.

“ She was just so about the West Room,” Richard Hatha-

way went on thinking. "As if she mightn't make her own home here, in any fashion she pleased! Why, that's the way to *have* it home. It isn't *those* things that I mind,—when she comes out, and gets interested. It's only when she draws in and shuts up, and I feel like somebody in a fairy story, that has married a kind of a spirit, or elf, or mermaid, or something, that has ways—high-air, or deep-sea ways—that he can't follow her in, or know anything about. Yet, after all, there's only *one* way."

"She knows I like mother's ways, for mother's sake, and for old times. But when they were mother's ways, it was mother's life that was in the house; it was her day now it's my wife's day, and they're her ways. Why shouldn't her turn come? By and by, perhaps,—even yet,—they will be 'mother's ways' to Nansie's children."

But he had said nothing like all this to her, when she had wanted the west room new papered and carpeted, and the dark chintz hangings taken away.

He only said, "Surely, Nansie. Do as you like. There's no need of any scruples about the money."

She felt he was kind, as he always was; but, as always, she scarcely knew half his heart, and he seemed scarcely to know half hers.

She made the room beautiful with her own fresh taste. She liked full, sunny tints, or strong and deep ones. She cared for no blue or rose colored fineries in such wise.

In her own room, which had been Mrs. Hathaway's,—which had always been Mrs. Hathaway's,—without making any sudden or radical change, she had gradually gathered about her much in the cool, shadowy green that she best loved for a spot to really rest and abide in.

In this guest-chamber, she put, now, a carpet of rich garnet shades, that glowed like a warm welcome before the entering feet; the walls she covered with a soft buff, like measured sunshine; and there were curtains to bed and windows of buff also, hanging full, making the whole place mellow and glad, and just bordered with the contrasting crimson. The buff china that she remembered in her first beautiful visit to the

Farm, stood on a corner shelf draped like the rest; and for the broad, old-fashioned toilet, flounced and bordered in like manner, she had made, in potichomanie, — buff and garnet, — two tall, graceful, stoppered flagons or vases, and a globe-shaped covered bowl, that was filled with rose-compote.

Mrs. Grandon Cope said the room was lovely.

"Chiefly, my dear, because with your pretty freshening, you have kept the old Hathaway look through it all. Don't give that up. You can't think how different it is from places where people turn upholsterers in."

So they were all coming out, and would see it.

Anstiss had pleasure and pride in her house-keeping.

They would go out into the Great Mowing, so magnificent when all the hay was down.

"Nobody else has anything like it for them," Augusta said.
"You may be sure of that."

Anstiss had on a white dress, and stood in the shady old doorway, when they came. Martha, in a "spry-colored calico," moved back and forth across the farther end of the long hall, with lingering step, like a figure in the back scenes, on for effect.

Hope had come out in the morning. Aunt Ildy could not leave Uncle Royle. Hope wore a brown dotted muslin, and her gleaming hair was tied with a brown ribbon that lay like a shadow in the gold. Hope's eyes were more like the sunshine — fuller fed chalices — than ever.

Mrs. Grandon Cope filled a great space around her, as she alighted, with flowing, brilliant, delicate French lawn, striped with the new, vivid shade of blue; a large black silk cardinal swept from her shoulders over this and parted from the throat in front, showing the dress; her bonnet was of the finest and whitest straw, lightly adorned with priceless black lace and azure flowers.

There was rose color, and more white, and violet, with laces and ribbons, and pearl and primrose tinted gloves, and little white mists of cobweb pocket-handkerchiefs, and furlings of fringed parasols like dropping butterflies, as the several car-

riages set down their occupants, and the group gathered and pressed gently up into the hall over the wide doorstone; and the whole entrance was full of dainty fabric and color, and sounds of soft, trained speech, and rustle of motion.

The spry-colored calico stood motionless at the back.

"My sakes, and gracious, and deliverance! Won't there be a bloomin'-out in the Great Mowin'? I 'spose they can all eat, like other folks, though. And I do, therefore and whereas and above all, hope and pray there'll only turn out to be cream-cakes enough!"

Richard Hathaway met his wife's friends at the top of his splendid upland field, where twenty-eight acres of English grass, close as the stems could stand, had been swept down into such great heaps and ridges that the ground it had grown upon seemed hardly space enough to toss and turn it in.

A dozen men and boys had just done gathering it up, dry, perfumy, finished into mounds.

Richard was in his white shirt-sleeves, rake in hand. For the rest, his light summer waistcoat was as fresh, and his trowsers as sharp in their newly ironed creases, as Grandon Cope's own.

He stood like a prince upon his own borders, with some sign of royalty in his hand, bidding them welcome.

"I should think you might be proud of him," whispered Augusta Cope to Anstiss, looking on with a pleased, flushed smile.

"She is. Just as proud as she can be," said Hope Devine.

It was in moments like these, when Richard showed his manliest, that Anstiss loved him best.

Tenderness makes a woman grateful; a noble manhood compels all her deep instincts of love.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GREAT MOWING.

"WHAT is it like,—so roomy and yet so full? It is like something that makes it seem beautiful and grand."

We walked up and down, in the clear, clean spaces, among the great heaps. In and out, endlessly, almost, we might walk over the wide sweep and swell of the magnificent field.

"What is it like, Grandon?" said Augusta Cope, laughing. "Hope wants to know."

"It is like a great camp."

"It is like a city, with domes, and wide, splendid streets and squares."

"It is like a council of thrones."

"It is like a sea, with islands."

One spoke after another.

Still Hope smiled, and waited.

"Not enough, or not right, yet?" asked Mr. Cope.

"Don't *they* all seem, too? What makes them grand?" she questioned shyly, still smiling.

"You want the idea behind,—the archetype," said Grandon Cope.

"Yes, back of all," said Hope.

"Do you think you can get it?"

He was interested and amused.

"I don't know," she said, in her rapid, rippling way. "It is a great way off from this little hay-field,—and all those other things might be between,—but it does remind, and it is true. I think it is like—the sky, after the worlds were swept up!"

"Well, I think you can't get behind that," cried the Cabinet Secretary's wife.

"I think you can," said Grandon Cope, with a grave quietness. "That only 'weaves for God the Garment thou seest him by.'"

That *was* a long way, out of the hay-field, for people in "clothes."

Augusta broke the silence.

"I think it is most like a great, big, splendid good time, and an enormous game of hide-and-seek. I wish the boys were here."

I had been glad to know that the boys were down at Fieldport with their nurse and their grandparents, when I made the party. But it reminded me suddenly, and with the thrill that those other words had already given me, sent a flush to my cheek, and made me turn away my face.

The boy that *I* wished were here,—the boy in his sixth summer!

Grandon Cope was walking by my side. We were the last of the party.

"Many-chambered, and full. Isn't it the Heart and the Home, that all these things 'seem like,' Mrs. Hathaway?"

He had given me time to breathe; time to put back what had begun to come with a rush, before he spoke. Then he said it with such a calm kindness. I was able to look up.

"I thank you, Mr. Cope," I answered him, warmly. "How did you know?"

"It has been in my mind ever since I came. Ever since I saw your husband standing there, in the midst and in the ownership of all this. I knew what it must be to him, and to you. I have boys to love and to hope for, Mrs. Hathaway."

It was a great deal easier after that. It was not all silk and muslin and flutter and dainty speech.

Hope knew, too. By and by she had a word for me. She had had many words, in these years of which the third was wearing. Every now and then she "saw" something for me.

"Don't you see, Austiss," she came and said, "that *thoughts* are *things*? In your heart you have a pleasure for him, and all this would be a joy with you, for him. That is the real part. I think he is glad in something, just this very

now, that you are put in mind how glad he might be. This is your end of it. Why not take it for a telling? If you had him here, you could only know that he was glad, and be glad too. It is just a thought and a thought. It doesn't matter what the word between is. It might be this pleasant day and the hay-field; but it *is* all the kingdom of heaven!"

These two understood best. Nobody else came straight to my want.

We went and sat under the Four Oaks. The men were piling the hay upon great wagons that went from heap to heap, down in the lower end of the Mowing. The sun was almost level low.

They had thrown up the hay for us here, purposely, around and between the trunks of the trees. The air was heavy with sweetness, and the soft, springy stems, just dried, pale-green still with their sealed-up juices, so clean and pliant, took any luxurious form we tossed them into.

"It is just perfect!" said the Secretary's lady, out of a deep nest.

"There is nothing like haytime in the country,—if you don't have rose-cold," said Augusta.

"Can you ride in a 'rigging'?" I asked them. "Because that is the way I mean to take you to tea, presently."

"On a load of hay? Lovely! But how shall we get up?"

"It isn't to be a very great 'up,'" I said. "Something constructed especially for us. And I believe they are coming with it now."

A large, gray-painted hay-rigging, filled, but not heaped, drawn by Richard's two handsomest oxen, great cream-colored creatures with black noses, black tips to their long horns, and large, beautiful eyes, came slowly up over the swell between the haycocks. Jabez, swaying his long whip, walked proudly enough, in his shirt-sleeves, by their heads.

"Haw! Gee-haw! Haw, Pres'dunt!" and the rigging creaked and wheeled up under the edge of the oaks.

Jabez slid a board from behind the side poles over the end to the ground.

I saw that my surprise was felicitous. The interest and the uncertainty were complete and delightful. Nobody knew just what next. Even Augusta, who had been in the middle as usual, rather patronizing and showing off the glory of field and sky, by way of elaborately justifying herself in regard to Hathaway Farm, looked at this moment as simply wondering and expectant as a child.

We put them in, Richard and I, and took our places at the end, to be the first to alight. Then the mighty, slow-stepping oxen drew us on, down "among the constellations," Hope said, laughing; "through the milky way," Richard suggested. How pleased and proud I was of his little joke when he made one!

But whither, since we were leaving the house behind us?
That they were not to know.

Down into Pine Lane, through the bar-place, crushing along on its deep carpet of leaf-needles. On and on; President and Governor treading slow; drinking in the summer fragrance of the resinous air.

I suppose they had never done anything so purely pastoral as that. Augusta Cope looked whole thesauruses of admiring adjectives at me.

But it was no studied stroke of mine, either. It was simply the prettiest place, and the nicest way of getting there. Yet she evidently felt that I was covering myself with glory. I had gone even beyond her guaranty. She was more than satisfied; she was ecstatically triumphant with me and the Farm.

"You are giving us a perfect pleasure," said Grandon Cope to me.

I knew how exactly he meant each measured word. I was just a little proud, then, as well as glad. I tasted the high flavor of a social success.

Richard was simply pleased that I should have all the praise.

Martha had done her part gloriously. We had all been busy in the morning, she and Hope and I, of course. But the final rendering of all things, and the consummate coffee,

and the delicately brewed tea, — these were her responsibilities and achievements. The spry-colored calico fluttered in and out of one of the little wood-nooks below the Knoll, like a flock of strange birds.

It was to be a haying-party, all through ; we were not to miss our luxurious cushions, even down here. Richard had had a load sent down on purpose, and it lay like a divan, in a ridge running around the whole summit of the Knoll, in whose centre stood the table, made only with boards and barrels, but covered with white Hathaway home linen that swept the grass.

Did they ever see such biscuits, and such white and brown bread, in beautiful contrasting piles, I wonder? Or such cream and raspberries,—the red fruit, large and cool and fair, lying in great baskets, lined and twined with leaves? Or such cream-cakes, and such sponge loaves, cut in long, generous slices that just lay apart, showing their golden pores? I trow not.

Quails whistled out in the fields. A single whip-poor-will in the skirt of the woods began its early evening song. The pines we had come through rustled, high up, as the light evening wind touched their tops. A tender-gleaming young moon looked in tremulously between the trees, out of the upper horizon light.

Not a woman there but me had a hall like this to gather guests in. It was a lovely thing to be the mistress of Hathaway Farm.

I set it all down now, and look at it, as I set it down in my mind and looked at it then. It was a lovely thing — a dear and lovely thing — to be Richard's wife ; he so kind and loving and giving and true ; and to be Mrs. Hathaway of the Farm. And yet — and yet — oh, how I hated and blamed myself, and pitied myself, that somehow, somewhere in me, was a place not quite fed, not quite satisfied, not truly giving itself up to this good man as he gave himself and all to me !

I tell the truth before my own conscience and before God, that what made me hideously wretched — the thing that thrust up its hateful head like a serpent in a Paradise — was

the thought, the misgiving, — it was only a glimpse and a threatening, for I would not face it long and deliberately yet, — not that I was not happy with this whole, strange, exacting nature of mine, but that I cheated him ; that I did not give as he gave. Not that I did not as a wife receive all that could possibly be in a wife's cup of happiness, but that as a wife I failed and was unworthy.

It was ~~of~~ no use to ask it now, but the asking would haunt me all my life. Ought I to have married Richard?

If my life had not begun hungry ; if I had not been a child without a mother ; if all nature had fitted rightly and sweetly to me, and filled me from the first, and as I went along, I should not perhaps have been this restless, groping, perplexed soul that I was. If I had been like those Edgell girls, I should never have begun to ask what else there was in the world, or whether I should ever find it. I should have taken things for granted, and as they came, and my horizon would at once have bounded and satisfied me. But I was always looking over into neighbor-lives ; always seeing people at pleasant windows that looked out as mine did not look. And so it went on with me. It was the disease bred of my half-nurture.

Augusta Cope bade me good-night that evening, warmly, affectionately.

"There was never anything better done," she said. "I am proud of you, Nannie."

"We thank you for a white day, Mrs. Hathaway," said Grandon Cope.

I went through the house alone, in the dark, as they all drove away. I heard Martha talking to a friend from Broadfields Centre, who came over to take tea with her and help wash dishes. The girl looked up to Martha, so old and experienced, and came to her as an adviser. She had something special, evidently, to talk about to-night.

"I can't see it any other way, Martha Geddis," she was saying. "I've turned it over and over, and every way it looks like a Providence. I expect I shall go. I believe in Providence."

"Well, I'd hold on to that," said Martha Geddis," anyhow.—But I'd see to it pretty careful that I didn't hurry Providence."

I went away into my own room,—our room,—Richard's mother's. I sat down by the window where the little table stood with her great Bible on it, as it always had. Upon the Bible was my little work-basket. I pushed it aside, and laid my head down upon the book. I was as one who kneels outside the temple, not daring to go in.

Had I hurried Providence?

Richard Hathaway walked up and down, behind the house, in the path that led to the Long Orchard.

"I've only half done it, after all," he was saying to himself, dealing with a new thought that had put itself before him to-night. "I've given her my life, with the rest all hanging upon that. Little Richie's gone, and it's going on six years. If there should never be another — What would a widow's thirds be to Nansie? What she wants is her home,—this home that's everything to her. John's well off, and Mary. I'll put it down to-night, and I'll see John Proctor Monday."

He went into the house, and sat down in a little room where he kept books and papers. He wrote out a memorandum of a will.

"All I die possessed of to be my wife's, Anstiss Hathaway's, for the remainder of her natural life. Her widow's thirds to be hers absolutely. Afterward, the rest to come back to my brother and sister, or their heirs-at-law. The homestead, with the land originally belonging to it,—the garden, the Long Orchard and the little north field,—to go to the oldest living of the family and name."

This was a plain man's way of loving. He dealt with facts. Perhaps it was easier. He knew what he had done, when he had done it.

John Proctor stopped him on Monday, when he gave him the paper and was going away to leave him to make it into a will.

"One thing, Mr. Hathaway. It doesn't seem to have occurred

to you. You wish to make this quite unconditional? Mrs. Hathaway might marry again."

Richard Hathaway stood still a moment at the office door.

"Give her one-third absolutely, if she does; and one-third more for her life. Let the homestead come back to the name, and the rest be divided."

It seemed almost as if he had given her up to another, saying this. He had a strange feeling upon him, riding home. When he saw his wife in the hall as he came up, it was as if he had got her back again. He gave his horse to a farm-boy, and came straight in to her.

"My little Nansie!" he said, putting his arm about her. It was such a common word with him that she never knew all there was in it. Yet every time he said it, it came out of some new thought of his for her, as if he had never said it before.

If she had known all that was behind it now! If she should come to know it, when she could only remember that it had been!

"My little Nansie! Has all gone well to-day?"

"Yes, dear," she answered, out of the side of her heart that was always warm to him. "Only—Richard! You are a great deal too good to me!"

"Only as good as I know how," he said again. This, too, was an old word.

"Am I as good as I know how,—as I ever *could* know how,—to him? Away down, deep?—Am I a hypocrite under the condemnation?"

In the seventh year of her marriage these questions had grown up into words, with Anstiss Hathaway.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIGHT.

AFTER that, I saw a good deal of the Copes, all summer; and I thought it did me good.

I remembered what Mrs. Cryke had said; why should I expect to get it "all in one piece"? Why must Richard be able to do everything for me that God meant in all this world? Why not let my life broaden, if it would, and so be more content with every part? Friends,—social interchange,—were not these also a great portion of what is given? I had been too much shut up with my own particular living. I had come to demand too much of it,—of myself.

I came home richer from South Side, always.

I met men of science there,—people of high culture, men and women. I learned about books, and what I wanted to read; and Augusta was always generous in lending. I learned what was agitating in the world of thought, of inquiry, of research. I gathered opinions; I compared and generalized; and I thought my apprehensions of life and realities and all related things grew thereby.

Yet at home the smite would come back upon my heart sometimes; for I was afraid I grew *away*. Away from Richard, who had no time—no turn, he said—for speculations, or analyses; for following up the things that people knew and lived in out in that other world; things that I wished I could go to him for. For I did wish it; I was loyal in wishing it, still.

One thing I learned,—I could not help learning,—seeing them so much. Grandon Cope and his wife were not one, but two persons.

Augusta was the same Augusta as ever; no deeper, no

larger of soul ; and I think that Grandon had just given it up. It seemed as if they had both given up. She was graceful, courteous, mindful of all her duties of position ; he was a noble man and thorough gentleman,—to his wife, as to all. But I think they could almost say all that they had to say to each other, in the presence of the guests they continually entertained. I think she locked away nothing from him. I do not think she had anything to lock away. She just lived in the middle, and never cared to withdraw.

He, great, strong of thought,—not able to give himself to her, because simply, a porcelain cup can never hold an ocean,—gave himself out upon all the world, upon all the universe of thought and things ; gave himself toward truth and eternity.

She recognized this in him, just as the wife of a great merchant or financier might recognize her husband's fiscal talent and his influence and weight in the monetary world, never expecting to understand his ledgers or his banking operations ; only proud, that belonging to her, he was of himself also, something. Grandon Cope's powers and achievements were to her what his earldom would have been if he had had one, and with it had made her a countess. She had married his mental rank ; and valued herself accordingly upon it.

Yet she could talk sufficiently and gracefully, too, upon the last new topics ; that was needful in her world, and as his wife. She wore the Cope jewels ; that was Mrs. Grandon Cope's prerogative.

Grandon Cope became my excellent friend. I honored him with a pure, admiring honor. I received from him what nobody else in the world could give me.

I was more nearly and more uniformly content, this year, than I had ever been before. There were two sides to my life again, and all my life was larger.

But I had no business to have two sides to my life, in such-wise.

The time came when I found that out ; found out that I was in a false and specious content ; that I was patching up what should have been perfect and entire with that which had no

relation to it. This was good, but it should not have been needed to make good the other. There was evil and fear in it, if it were. Fear that it should replace and thrust aside and put asunder.

A whole year went by,—a year of comings and goings and living on,—one of the years that it takes to make a page in the stories that we tell ourselves,—before I began to think of this, before I turned round and looked back to see where the time had brought me. Many such years might have gone by, writing a deep, terrible story in all our lives, without much sign or blot upon the surface, but for a thing which happened.

In the end of that next summer, Richard went away into New York State, to see his brother John and his sister Mary. He had business matters with them, and it had also been a long time since they had met.

I should have gone with him, but that Uncle Royle was failing very much, and Aunt Ildy was not quite well herself. Hope had a great deal on her hands. So I went to my old home for the week or ten days that Richard would be gone. Martha had her friend Priscilla from the Centre, to stay with her and help keep house; Priscilla having as yet not “hurried Providence” to conclusions, but being still in a waiting and counsel-beseeching frame of mind.

I was busy, helping Hope, and waiting on Uncle Royle, the first few days; then Aunt Ildy’s indisposition wore off, and Uncle Royle was more comfortable. Hope and I had time for quiet sittings and talks in our own room, and for going out a little.

One morning, Augusta Cope came down. She had just found out that I was there.

“Why did you not let me know?” she said.

“I only came to be of use,” I told her. “I could not expect to have leisure to go about.”

But in my heart there had been an undefined feeling that I would not immediately begin to be happy with that other half of me when Richard had just gone away.

“Now, however,” she said, “you are more at liberty. You

must come and dine with us to-morrow. We have no company, except one or two staying in the house. It is not often you can come so easily, and Grandon has been showing us some pretty experiments lately, which you would like."

Well, I promised.

Why not? Only for this half consciousness of a secret sense of freedom, which had been the reason of my self-discipline in resolving that I would not be in a hurry to let the Copes find me out.

It was strange to say to Aunt Ildy, the next day, so quietly and without contradiction, that I was "engaged to dine with Augusta." It was strange to put on — before that very glass at which I had tied the blue ribbon in my hair, and hidden it away so carefully, like my pleasure, on my first going to South Side, — my rich, sunny-brown silk and my delicate laces, — of my best few, to be sure, but fine and beautiful as Augusta's own, — and to fasten the little three-cornered, matronly bit that lay upon my hair with golden pins, and to take my soft white shawl over my arm, and go down to Mrs. Grandon Cope's carriage which waited for me at the door.

For my life I could not help a ridiculous feeling that Aunt Ildy would interfere; at least take off something that she thought unsuitable or unnecessary in my apparel, before I went.

It was a pretty coupé, with gray horses, — Augusta's own especial equipage. The carriage and the horses were new; a birthday present from her husband.

I did not compare that with what Richard could give to me; there was no mean covetousness like that in me; I desired most earnestly only the best gifts, — the gifts that Augusta Cope took only at their outside, as she took these things. All, to her, was but surrounding. I could not help thinking of that.

Neither were the quiet elegance and luxury of South Side any more a desire or a contrast to me. I loved my beautiful life at the Farm. That was as true and as delicate, in its own fresh, simple way, as this. I was quite content, as I had been years ago, to think of the two, and to find a kind of uni-

son between them. I was as willing to be Mrs. Hathaway by the side of Mrs. Cope, as I had been to see my old friend, Richard's mother, alongside Allard's mother in the old days.

The elder Mrs. Cope was almost lovelier than ever, now.

Her hair, turned softly silver, gleamed under the same delicate coverings; her gray and white narrow-striped silk, with its one little flounce, her lace sleeves, her close collar of Valenciennes fastened with a single diamond; her face, and smile, and mien,—in all she was as queenly fair and gentle to the eye of the woman as she had been to that of the child.

The word "mother" still came up in my heart as I looked at her.

After dinner, in the library, Grandon Cope came and sat by me.

"I have something to show you presently, Mrs. Hathaway," he said. "I remember you love color, and the color-types. Do you recollect the 'wall of the New Jerusalem'?"

"It was one of the steps up for me," I answered. "It was a point in my life."

"This has to do with it. How, perhaps you will tell me. You know the idea of the waves of light?"

"The undulatory theory; yes. We used to laugh at it at school, saying it was the great quaking bog into which the philosophers flung all their confusions. Everything inexplicable was dismissed with that phrase."

"But if you think of it as a pulse of God's life?"

He asked it low and reverently.

"I did," I said to him, low also, in return. "I wondered they did not go further, and say that. I knew they just stopped at the shore line between matter and spirit."

"Do you know what makes the colors in the soap-bubble?"

"Refraction, of course; like any prism."

"But their coming and going,—the order of their change. Do you know they come and fade in the everlasting order,—the octave of the rainbow,—the highest, last? As the amethyst is the top stone of the City Wall?"

I said nothing. I only listened.

"Shall you and I make a soap-bubble? A sublime soap-bubble, with the truth in it? The others have seen it. I wish that you should, too."

He got up and took me in, through a little arched and curtained portière, to an inner room, a mere recess within the library, where was a table, with many little delicate experimental appliances upon it; a cupboard, opening above in the wall, containing jars and vials; a globe standing in one corner upon a pedestal, and upon a bracket, in another, a model of some elegant machinery in a glass case.

"I will not take it out there to-night. We will have it quite to ourselves."

He drew forward upon the table a little silver circular frame, — a mere rim, — lightly supported, and quite empty.

"I shall set a bubble in that, and make it stay; that is, if I have good luck," he said.

And he went to the wall-cupboard and took down a low, open, wide-mouthed jar, and a little silver-mounted pipe. The jar had soap-suds in it.

"Not common soap-suds exactly," said he. "A little bewitched. Will you blow the bubble, or shall I?"

"I'm afraid I should break the charm," I answered.

He dipped the bowl of the pipe, and blew a clear, round globe, carefully, to a size correspondent to the little silver frame; and then gently and nicely lodged it in the rim, and detached the pipe.

"I think you have somehow strengthened the charm," he said, smiling, "I hardly ever succeed with the very first; and I wanted especially to have it perfect to-night."

Then he moved it cautiously, placing it under a porcelain-shaded reading-lamp, which threw a concentrated force of brilliant light upon it.

"Now you will see the colors come," said he, "as the bubble thins. Just as they would have done if I had blown it bigger. It is a little rainbow in harness. — Do you know how it will begin? What you will see first?"

"It ought to be the red."

"It will be."

As he spoke, I saw it coming ; the fine, vivid crimson, flushing up under the rays of the lamp ; spreading down, down, like a sunrise over a little world.

"But I never saw a bubble like that!" I cried. "They always come in two or three colors, on different sides ; running round and round, and showing through and through."

"I told you this was subordinated. But that is just because of the thing I am going to tell you.

"The waves of light, — the pulses, — the same from every little centre like this, that they are from the heart of the Sun, — come in measured lengths ; the red longest, because the pulse is slowest ; the violet shortest, with its inconceivably fine and quick vibration ; and every little film on earth that catches them, receives just its own color, as its thickness or thinness corresponds — responds, perhaps I should say — to the stroke, and takes up the beat. — Do you see the gold coming?"

A clear and perfect joy above the softening flush ; a mellow beauty lightening more and more, holding the pure sphere in a loving glory ; the crimson fallen down, till it lay, still receding, diminishing, around the under hemisphere, and just above the horizon rim ; the gold pouring, pouring in its turn, like an intense, enfolding rapture.

"But why do they not flush here and there, as they do when children blow them?"

"Because this was blown with as regular a force as possible, to make it even ; and because it was not distended too far. Now the varying thickness depends upon the settling down of the liquid toward the base ; so the red drops, and the gold comes over ; see ; there is the green !"

Still the crimson lay beneath, like a memory of fire ; above, the purged and molten gold ; and now, creeping from the topmost, the fulness, the rest, the *livingness*, of the deep, bright, satisfying green.

Like an emerald sea ; stealing down gently ; all the little globe flooded with it graciously ; changing, changing ; purifying into blue ; the gold let fall, and resting on the vanishing

line of crimson ; the green sleeping upon these ; the tender azure calm coming down, like a heaven of peace.

Clearer and clearer grew the thinning sphere ; it was like fine blue air ; like a sky fragment ; it trembled, as a visible breath.

We held our own. Will it go, before it has done ?

Thinner, thinner yet ; only the faintest, purest, gold-light and soft blue-green, and quivering blue ; the gold gives way ; it is not wanted any more ; the mingling of the green is gone. It is pure, holy, distant sapphire.

Grandon Cope just lifted a finger, as if he would say, Look ! We would not stir the air with a word, leaning toward the spirit-wonder.

It was violet, now. We could not tell how the blue went by. Now it was neither water nor air ; but an ethereal flame,— delicate, intense ; something we seemed to see, as it were, inwardly ; it was such a far, impalpable beauty. Deepening,— rarefying,— receding. There was an impression of a marvellous instant ; we *felt* what amethystine meant ; and it was gone.

The silver rim stood empty.

* I let my head fall down. I felt as if somebody had died, and I had caught a gleam of heaven as the spirit went in.

"It has been more than a bubble-play to you," said Grandon Cope.

Was it a bubble-play to them ?

"Mr. Cope ! It was a human soul !"

He said nothing ; only looked into my face, that I had lifted, with deep, fervent eyes.

"It was fire and passion ; it was human joy ; it was life and fulness ; it was purifying, and peace ; it was the inmost heaven,— at last !"

"You have seen !"

Then he stood up.

Was it my own self that whispered to me, or a tempting spirit, in that instant of seeing, of uplifting ?

Why, across the beauty of what he had given me, came the

flashing consciousness of the *recognition* those deep eyes had for me, in the utterance of our common thought?

Why did I think of Augusta, laughing with low, pleasant grace, in that next room, among her guests?

Did I say it to myself? "He never could have looked upon her so!"

I do not know whether I thanked him or not.

I got up to go away into the other room.

Grandon Cope's voice made me pause again. He was gathering up the things that he had used.

"It will all come," he said; I could hardly tell whether to me or to himself. "But we must rest in the rims God puts us in."

It flashed out of me, — the question born of the keen truth. The truth I saw in life; his life, and mine.

"But what of the rims we put ourselves in?"

His strong, just, obedient spirit looked forth at me from pure, swerveless eyes.

"That He *lets* us put ourselves in? We must be patient in the rims He *finds* us in."

I had asked to go home early, for I could not keep Aunt Ildy up and I knew she would not go to bed till all was locked, and the house settled.

The coupé came round at half-past nine. Augusta slipped out into the hall to say good-by, and Mr. Grandon Cope went with me to the carriage.

He put me in, and stood upon the step, handing me my shawl and some books that they had lent me.

Neither of us noticed that the coachman left his horses for a moment.

He was a new servant; if he had been with the Copes longer, he would not have done this. I do not know what it was for; I believe he said afterward it was only to throw some blanket into a doorway. The horses started. Mr. Cope glanced to the front, and called out a stern "Whoa!" For the space of a thought he stood upon the step; it was an instantaneous

calculation. It was too late to reach their heads, and the door was swinging open.

He sprang inside and shut it.

We heard the servant rush forward ; we knew he grasped at the reins ; we caught a cry, half imprecation, half dismay ; we knew he had lost them ; that we were alone, and the horses guideless.

Grandon Cope let down the wide front glass.

He reached himself half through, across the driver's seat, as if he would get out that way, and obtain the reins. He saw them dragging, I suppose, far out of grasp.

The horses, frightened now, were galloping. We were out of the avenue, upon the hill.

Then he drew back, and looked at me.

"Keep quiet and strong," he said. "Something will stop us before long. The carriage is new, and thickly cushioned. We shall come out of this."

Then he turned, bracing a knee against the low, front half-seat of the coupé, — for he could not, of course, stand upright, — and looked forward again, watching.

I do not know whether we are conscious of fear in the very midst of danger, as we are when it is only threatening. I do not think that in the actual crash of that electric bolt which came down above our heads in the old Polisher house, I felt so much as afterward, when I dreaded that it might come again. There is a strange sensation, — "This is it ! It is here !" which snatches us into a terrible intimacy and relation with the peril, that will not let us look at it from far enough to know its terror, as we do before and after that embrace.

I do not know what it was I felt, as I sat there by Grandon Cope's side, with the horses running away, down the hill, toward the bridge.

I made no sound. He kept his face forward, looking intently through the open front at the bounding horses, and the waymarks of the road.

We thundered over the bridge, into New Oxford Street.

I heard the shouts of men. I knew a crowd was gathering,

and running by our side ; a changing crowd, distanced, and still renewed.

I wondered, passively, what the end must be.

I, too, could see, and watch ; with all the intensity of strained nerve, and keenly quickened apprehension. The night was bright. I knew well every bit and pass of the way.

We were in the broad River Street.

There was an old house being taken down, that made a projecting corner; at a crossing. A rough fence, enclosing it, took in a third part of the highway.

The turning here, a short one, led right down upon the open wharf.

He knew we must bring up there. There, or — the carriage was so fatally new and strong !

Clear as light was the thought that thrust itself upon me then. Sharpened, distinct. I could neither resist nor deny it. I can never deny it, to myself or in the sight of Heaven.

“ I shall go out of the world — God knows where — with this soul that is beside me ! ” I can never deny the thrill that was not all awfulness.

I remembered Hope’s saying : “ I wonder what He will do with me next ! ”

It was God’s doing.

I looked at it in a strange, intense expectancy.

God sent me back into my life again ; after he had showed me myself.

There was a whirl — a shock — a sound of crashing, as if many little helpless sticks were broken, — it seemed like that. It was the strong axle of the carriage.

We were thrown headlong ; the coupé went down a slight embankment, and turned directly on its top. I was wedged in, weighed upon ; my neck bent painfully, my head buried and pressed down with I knew not what. The blood rushed behind my eyes. I thought, “ Now it has come. Now, my neck will break.”

Then something loosened by me ; I could move ; could

struggle. I was being helped, lifted. I was out in the air, in Grandon Cope's arms.

I was dizzy, faint; I tried to stand; then Mr. Cope put his arm about me again; then I heard somebody say, "I do not think she is hurt." It was Mr. Cope; but his voice sounded far off.

I suppose I fainted away. I had never done it before, and I thought I died.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THORNS.

HE carried her in his strong arms down the whole long street. He took his wife from Grandon Cope, and walked away with her as if she had been a little child.

He had stood at the doorway of Royle Chism's house, watching. He had got home that afternoon.

He had seen the horses come tearing down the hill.

He knew that it was the Cope carriage, and that Anstiss was in it. It went by, sweeping, swaying round the curve, and dashed up the street; driverless, the reins dragging and tangling.

He rushed after it, his arms flung out, as if he would reach from behind and seize it back with his two hands.

The two men stood, bareheaded both, beside the shattered carriage. The crowd came up.

Mr. Cope gave Anstiss Hathaway into her husband's hands. Richard went away with her from among them all, whispering over her, breathlessly, as he strode along:—

“ My poor little wifie! Poor little frightened Nansie! ”

She came to herself, with the motion and the air, just before they reached the door. She felt herself borne along; her eyes opened toward the blue night heaven, upon the distant, burning stars.

“ Why! why! ” she gasped, tremulously. “ What is it? Which world am I in? — O Richard! ”

For his face bent down above her instantly.

“ Don't kiss me! I was tempted of the devil! ”

“ What did she mean? Was her mind touched? Will she be ill? ”

Anstiss lay still upon the bed, and Richard watched her. Aunt Ildy had given her wine, and bathed her head, and rubbed her limbs, and felt of every bone, and then had made her take the unfailing six drops of camphor, and left her quiet with her husband, and gone, herself, to bed.

Hope was in the next room, and would be called if anything were wanted. Stillness was the best thing.

Grandon Cope had come to the house, to ask about her. He had told Richard how it was, and then with a friendly grasp of the hand, and a thankful congratulation that it was no worse, had said he must hasten homeward, to relieve anxiety there.

Men were coming with the horses. He borrowed a hat of Richard, and walked on.

If Richard had even been a man of evil mind, or had lived more among the evil of the world, he could not have thought ill of this frank, high, simple gentleman. Anstiss' words could have no touch of relation to him. Richard Hathaway truly never thought of it. He was too high himself.

They were mere wildness, or they were out of some fresh phase of the old, mysterious discontent.

"I almost wish she would do something wrong; something she could look at outside of herself, and I could forgive her for," the poor, patient, loving fellow thought.

"She is wearing, wearing, all the time; eating herself up. Everything takes hold away down, where I can't reach or help. She is always holding up her soul to me with a thorn in it."

He did not know that it was poetry and pathos; it was a natural illustration out of his homely, gentle, compassionate life.

He knew how to help dumb things in their hurts; his wife he could not help.

But he could sit there, all those midnight hours, watching her sleep; hoping, fearing, how she might awake; not knowing what the shock had done. She was so timorous, so sensitive.

By and by she moved; awoke.

She said she should like a glass of water. Richard brought it instantly, gladly.

"Why, it *is* you!" she said, recollecting. "When did you come back?"

"Just in time, Nansie, to take care of you. Just in time for you to frighten me thoroughly.—What were you and Mr. Cope running away for?"

He had to make some simple little joke,—the first he could think of. He was so glad.

"O Richard! I didn't mean to! I don't want to run away from you, in *anything*. I want you to come too, always. I do want to be a better wife, Richard!"

There it was again. The string that was always quivering.

"Be a good girl, now, then, and go to sleep."

She raised herself upon her arm, and looked around.

"Why, Richard, it is the middle of the night! You mustn't sit up there. I can't go to sleep unless you do."

"Then I will. I will come to bed directly."

He moved away, took out his watch and wound it, laid off his coat upon a chair, and then went and stood a moment by the window.

The soothing of the camphor had had its way. She had not shaken sleep quite from her. Her eyes were closed again, and she was still.

Richard delayed and waited. She thought he was coming, and she fell asleep.

Then he put the candle out, and drew his feet out of his slippers, and lay down beside her, quietly, in his clothes.

He was not easy about her, yet.

I tried to tell Richard about it, when we got home again, out at the Farm.

But what could I tell him?

Just that flash of thought? Or all that that flash showed me? How could I make him see?

It was what might have been; nothing that was; it was a glimpse of good and evil; good missed and forbidden, and so evil; evil that should never be.

I could make no words of it that should be true; it was only a word between God and me. A word that I must bear to

hear in the stillness. A thing that I must bear to know possible of myself,—myself, Richard Hathaway's wife.

And then, what?

To go on, taking all his love; giving him what I could.

The pain was, that this seemed all he wanted.

"It won't do to keep raking things up to see what they are. That's your mistake, Anstiss; I don't understand it. It's only misery and excitement. I never believed in dragging out evidences and experiences in religion. I don't believe in it any more between man and wife. The more you look after things and get anxious about them, the more it seems as if they weren't there. Take it for granted. You believe in the Lord; believe in yourself, and in me."

Did he know—did he remember—he said the Lord's own words?

"We are married, and we must just go on."

That was what he answered when I said to him brokenly,—half questioning, half confessing:—

"What if I knew better than ever, Richard, that I don't give you half enough? That there is something in me I might give?"

We were married, and we must just go on.

That was the way he said it. It seemed to shut me in, and nail me down.

And yet Richard was so good, and I meant to love him so! Anybody would be tired of me, to hear me tell all this. Nobody would have patience.

I was tired of myself. Tired, and ashamed. But I wanted to be true. I wanted Richard, at least, to know just what I was.

He meant to do her good. He thought most of her, as he always did. He set before her the plain fact of her life. He would allow no weight to her fancies, her self-accusations. But he kept back the sting they gave him.

"I suppose I know what she means; what she thinks she means, just for the minute. But she doesn't, and she never shall. I'll never understand it; and she shall never have it to

think of that I have understood it of her. It will all pass by, so.

"A man might be a little crazy, even, and get over it, if he never had it to think of that other people knew, or mistrusted. That's where they give up.

"It shall be all right between Nansie and me.

"God help me if I've brought her here and should ever let it go all wrong!"

He sat on a stone in the shady Low Pasture ; he was on his way down through his fields. He held his straw hat crushed between his hands. There were knotted veins in his temples, and there was a flush about his eyes.

Richard Hathaway's bright, kind face had hardly ever looked like that.

Did she know what it had been to him to say those commonplace words that "shut her in and nailed her down"?

"We are married ; and we must just go on."

It needed little between these two. If he had said the same thing in other fashion,—the thing that was truly in his faithful, enduring soul !

How did it differ, after all, from what Grandon Cope had said :—

"We must be patient in the rims he finds us in"?

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOPE'S WITNESS.

UNCLE ROYLE died that autumn.

After that, Aunt Ildy's life seemed to waver in her, querulously, like a candle-flame whose wick has burnt through the remnant of its nourishment, and dropped loose in its socket.

There was a ring of living left ; but the spirit flashed hither and thither within it, painfully, restlessly ; not knowing how to join itself to or feed upon it again.

It never would feed upon it any more, strongly and steadily ; it would only float and glimmer ; as that which remained should melt and crumble slowly around it ; and suddenly it would go away, into the dark.

We all saw how this would be. She saw it herself. She waited for it, counting, secretly, her own pulses of pain, and the weary time ; wondering when the flickering would be over. Strong people break down so, when the break comes.

"She'll go soon," Lucretia said. "She's begun to look in the glass. Figgeratively, I mean. She sees her own pudgickness ; and it aint so much to be seen, neither, as it was ; but folks sees over their shoulders, when they come to look. 'I believe it's my crossness that keeps me,' she says to Hope one day, when she couldn't stretch the sheet as tight and smooth as a fire-board, to suit her. 'Just as vinegar does pickles.' And I donna but it does. It's the vim, what there is of it."

The hardest thing in my life, that winter, was that Richard would not intrude upon it.

I had my books and my thoughts ; my household cares and interests ; he left me very much with these, going his own quiet way, except as he could give me any practical help, or as things of necessity concerned us mutually.

He was as kind as ever; it was not avoidance; it was rather a great reserve, like a dammed-up stream. I myself had thrown the bar across. I had told him I could not give; he would not demand.

We should "just go on."

Not that he was not tender either; but he was not gladly, freely so.

He seemed to think he troubled me.

He made me feel as if I had crushed him down. He could have taken no more exquisite way of punishing me.

I had complained that life was not enough. It was being taken from me, even that which I had.

Even that? I began to know, dimly, what I was losing.

I was all adrift. I had forfeited earthly love, and I had not found God's.

I knew this, now. That I had only thought about it, seen it beautiful from afar; stood without, counting the stones of the wall; not looking for the door, that I might enter in.

What was I to do? Give up my life? Consider it failed, lost, wasted; thrown away, utterly and forever? Give it up here, at eight and twenty years? Call it judgment,—the rest of it,—and conviction of sin?

Give up his, also, and ruin it?

That way lay madness,—hell.

The life beyond? The life that for one wild, wicked moment, I had thought I was ready for, and that God was ready to give me?

How did I know? I said I had not found God. What could I expect of that life, having failed miserably in this? What should come of the seed that was black-moulded in the furrow?

So I walked on, in a blind shadow.

My old life fell away from me; the last sign and framework of it went down, leaving me to stand alone in the life that I had made.

Aunt Ilidy died before the spring. She took cold, and the doctor said it was pneumonia. That was the outside ailment.

We knew when the wind came, "out of the sea," smiting the one point of her narrowed, intense vitality, and when she began to die. That is the point behind, which doctors never do know.

Lucretia went away, down East, among her kindred.

John Eveleith hired the house and the store of me, married a wife, and brought her there.

Hope came back to the Farm.

I took home Aunt Ildy's linen and silver, and all her household treasures. How strange that seemed! Her spoons, her pillow-cases and tablecloths,—why, they had always seemed augustly different from any I could ever have! Hers was real, old, solemn house-keeping. Mine was as a child's,—a make-believe. I wipe those teaspoons reverently now, with the fear of her eye upon me.

It was brighter for having Hope again. It always was. Out-doors, and in-doors; weather, housework, needle-work, books,—all were pleasanter and cheerier.

Richard looked more as he used to do,—before I came, and worried him. Something of the old times crept back, even across the spoiling I had made.

We had a book, one day, Hope and I; a story we were reading. "How real it seems, this living in books!" I said. "As if we opened some secret door, or looked down out of some sky into a human world, seeing the whole of it; knowing the whys, holding the spell, and the key, that we might drop, or whisper, and help it all out with. Only that we can't reach into a dream! How strange it is that books should ever have been made; that there should be such a life inside our living! That it should be so much to us, and yet that it should be really nothing at all!"

"It would have been stranger if the books had not been made," said Hope. "Then there would have been something in the world without any shadow or image. Because the *reading* is true. There's always a reading like that; and a watching and an entering in; and *we're* the stories. It's to let us know, and to learn us how."

"I wonder if anybody is reading over me,—over *us*," I said, for I was impatient of the miserable "me."

"Yes, ever so many," answered Hope. "God is; and the 'innumerable company!' — I am, Anstiss."

"Read on, then. Turn over the leaf."

"God turns over the leaves; but a little wind raises them, sometimes, and I—standing by, you know—can catch a word, or a line, or the look of a page. I *think* I have seen what is coming."

"Tell me then. There has no leaf turned over for ever so long, Hope; I have looked till the spelling is all strange!"

"Then you have come out of the real reading. That is what we have done when we begin to see the letters so. You must go in again; you must forget; then you will see; then the leaf will turn. And you will. That is what I see for you. I see, for all this heavy reading,—close and packed with hard thinking, that the little children always skip,—the *story* coming again; things happening; bright words; it looks 'pretty' again; it grows simple and easy. Anstiss, there is *love* in it. There is love in *you*, dear, that you don't half know of yet; love that will *ache*, if you don't let it be glad; it must *make* you know, somehow.—Never mind the book and the leaves; *you* are the book."

She flung it away as it were with a gesture of her hand.

She came over to me.

"I see *you*. And I know it is in *you* to be a sweet, joyful woman, taking God's love out of the hand he sends it by, and giving back that he has trusted you with in return. For him; for Richard; and—think! he will *never* get it except from *you*!"

She had come close to me, and knelt down beside me; her arm was round me; her face looked into mine; there were tears in her glowing eyes.

"You see I know so well it is in *you*," she repeated.

"It is in me, Hope; but it wants something! It can't live! He might believe, and I might believe; the right, the need, might be in each of us; but if it is hushed up,—if it wants a language!"

" Well ; He maketh even the dumb to speak. The word shall not return to Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sends it. You must believe that His word for you is in Richard Hathaway's heart. You must be glad of it even before it comes ; as you were of that little child before it came, Anstiss. It will come in heaven, if it doesn't all come here."

" Oh, that little child ! " I broke forth, crying. " It is as if I never had it. I cannot think I ever did."

" Yes ; you — ever — did," Hope answered, slowly, giving me the thought as it came to her.

" The strangest time — if it could be — would be the time that wasn't. But everything always was. You never did *not* have little Richie ! "

" Hope ! You strange woman ! "

My tears dried, astonished.

" You see it is all so safe, — from the beginning. We cannot miss of anything, or lose anything. That little, tender love was with you, — in you, — all your life ; waiting. You just had the short sign of it, and then the cloud took it again. ' Our life is hid — with Christ — in God.' I've just thought of it so ! And God glorified *him* with the glory that he had with him before the world was ! "

The light, instantly received, was in Hope's wonderful eyes.

" How *do* you get these things ? " I asked her, marvelling ; as the Jews asked the Lord.

" They come," she answered, simply.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHAT HOPE TOLD RICHARD.

HOPE came down into the long barn.

She had a little willow basket in her hand ; going to look for eggs, in the great sweet mow.

Hope always found eggs ; just as she did her white, beautiful thoughts. They were right there ; ready laid for her ; how could she help it ?

The search was " like something," as the hay-field had been. In a wide sweetness and generousness and rest, wonderful things lay hidden, put away for her to come and find ; things pure, like pearls ; with life in them, also. In the secret places, and in the quietness.

There is something strangely pleasant and suggestive in the stillness of a great country barn, when one is all alone in it. The mysterious nearness comes about one that is only felt when one is away, apart ; in some safe, beautiful hush.

Hope went up the steep, narrow, smooth-worn stairs, brown and polished with much treading, and years of seedy plenty. There was a space around the front, on the upper floor, past the great window, leading over to the mangers. From this the hay sloped up, filling the warm, fragrant chamber.

She went up a little way, climbing the elastic heap ; then she sat down a minute, taking in the sweet companioning of the loneliness ; she never liked to go for eggs in a hurry.

Then she heard movements by the mangers, away over behind ; some one of the men was there, tossing down hay.

But presently came Richard's voice : —

" Hope ! Is that you ? "

" Yes. I've come for eggs."

She heard him move around toward her, brushing the rust-

ling hay as he pressed along. He approached slowly; when he came before her, he stopped, put one foot up on a low, gathered ridge of the broken mow, leaned his arm across his knee and pulled out hay-stems, which he doubled and bent and turned in his fingers.

"Hope! tell me what to do," he said.

Hope's heart beat quick. She did not say "About what?" as most would have done, to break a silence, and to lead him on. She knew what it was.

"God will tell you what to do, Richard," she answered, presently. "He does. You *do* do."

It is almost too simple and unfinished to write down. They were the first words which came. The meaning and the feeling overleaped them. They said a great deal to Richard Hathaway. There was a great deal more for him in Hope Devine's heart, which neither they nor any words could say.

"I think I want to be told what to *undo*. I can't go back. How can I make up?"

"That isn't the word, Richard. You are *laying* up all the time. You must just *be*, what you are; and wait until she sees. Then her heart will be all broken with love and repentance — one of these days. It can't help it."

Hope's voice trembled.

"She grows thinner and thinner; she worries, and blames herself. There is a great growth in her that she wants to give away, — that she thinks she ought to give to me. And I — can't hold it. I'm a simple man, Hope; I can just live on and do for her as I know how. It's like the story in the Bible; she hasn't where to bestow all her fruits and her goods; she needs to pull down her barns and build greater. I don't know, Hope, but I ought to let her go!"

"Richard!"

"I don't mean to break everything up; that isn't the way of quiet people like us; and I can't put her back, as I said. But I might do something. Old Mr. and Mrs. Cope are going to Europe by and by; in the summer. I might let her go with them. Wouldn't they have her?"

"O you great heart!" cried Hope Devine, involuntarily.

"No," said Richard, lifting for an instant eyes that had a surprise upon their sadness. "Only honest. Only doing as I would be done by, as near as I can."

"Only that," said Hope, with the same tone in her voice, restrained.

"Would it be better?"

"No," said Hope, instantly. "Don't think it of her that she would go; and don't think it of yourself that all Europe is any bigger or any better for her than you can be. Why, Richard!" she went on, lighting up; "this is a beautiful farm of yours, and worked and tended beautifully. And full, all over, of kind, sweet things, pleasant to have, and that people must have every day; but after all it's only the top of it! You don't think you've got at, or brought out, all there is! It's yours, for all that any man can say, way down to the very middle; to the rocks, and coals, and fires. And think of the things that are there; the things that are laid away! Whenever they are wanted, they will be found and come to light. Now, the farm is the best, perhaps. In other places the ground is tossed and torn up; and there is no quiet, small planting and growing; but gold is coming out, or iron, or coal. There are men's minds and lives like that. God orders it, and it is good. But he has put yours here, to wait awhile. Yet you're as rich, and as deep, and as strong as they are; and it's out of the strength of the deep things that the pleasant things grow. It's all *in* you, Richard; and if she looks for it, she will find it—some day! I suppose that is what people are married for; that they may take a great, long time, away beyond the world, perhaps; if it were all made out and measured from the first, what would the living be for? It is a *will be*; it isn't an *is*."

"Sometimes it begins sooner, though; I don't want all her life to be a hungry waiting. Hope! I think—people say it without much thinking sometimes—I think I could lay down my life for her."

He said it very gravely and gently; there was no exclamation point in his voice; it was a plain, true period.

"I think you could. 'Greater love hath no man than this,'

Richard. And love is the greatest of all. You two *love* one another."

"We — two?"

Something in those slow, separate words, and that emphasis, touched for Hope a yet higher chord of perception.

"And yet two do not make a perfect love," she said.

It was strange how she sat there, this girl, saying what she had not had it in her mind to say a minute before ; speaking, truly, as the Spirit taught her at the instant how. Every act, every word, every perception in life, brought her always, surely, to the next ; she stumbled and she failed at nothing, because she walked in the light.

It was strange, too, that she sat there, saying these things to this man, whom she might have loved and married. She just gave as it was given to her ; as she was sent to do.

Richard Hathaway looked up again.

"Two do not make a perfect love?"

He did not understand. He thought, instantly, of his little lost Richie ; of the dead Richie, buried in Broadfields church-yard out there, over the hill ; of the vacancy in their home ; of what might have been between them two.

But this girl did not mean that. She would not tell him of this loss, this lack, in such manner.

His eyes, his grave, lifted brows, questioned and waited.

"No. It must be joined. It must be a whole thing, and perfectly beautiful, before it is done. It must be — 'in the Lord.'"

Hope's face was like the face of an angel. She saw afar off. The word, that fed her always, came, rushing in upon her spirit, like the tongues of old. She saw things that she did not really know. She spoke of what she had never thought of or been taught.

"Isn't that what the triangle means? Isn't it only because some line of light comes down to each, that there *must* run a line between? Why, I don't know anything but the name of it; but I think that is what Trigonometry stands for; the signs of the lines that measure all through heaven, between the souls! Three lines are the least that can make a form of

anything. Three sides make the prism, and divide all the beauty. Isn't it everywhere like a network of beautiful threads,—the love that is between each two of us, and between each one of us and God; holding us all together?—Isn't that where the thought of the Trinity came from?—God, and his Son, and the world; and the Spirit, reaching all through? For, He loveth the Son; and He so loveth the world. And then,—if the world will love the Son;—it is whole, it is one, it is safe again!"

She forgot, half, that she was talking. Her mind sprang from point to point. She turned, as it were, the crystal of her precious thought in her hands, and the lights flashed forth, as from the facets of a diamond.

Heart and voice thrilled all through when the last came; came and was spoken as instantly as the rest; but the tone lowered and intensified, and the eyes looked more afar, and the face was yet more radiant.

Richard stood still; his head bowed a little, as if a prayer had been made in a church; he was hushed with surprise, too; people do not often talk like that; he had no answer, certainly.

Besides, there was always in him the old feeling, grown of early training in the New England notions of religion, that he had no right; that he was not a participant; he let it go by him, with a wistfulness perhaps, but that was all; as he let the cup of the communion go by him in the church.

"Hope," he said, presently, speaking from this feeling of withoutness, "I have never experienced religion."

"Yes, you have," said Hope, quickly. "Everybody has.—No! Nobody has! I mean—it is the *will be*. It takes forever, Richard. If you have only begun to be married, how can you more than have begun to live with God?"

"But there must be the beginning. The conviction, the giving up, you know; all that; and I have never come to it. I am a plain fellow, Hope; I can't go deep in anything. I must just live on."

"'He that loveth, dwelleth in God, and He in him!'—'And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal

even this unto you.' — It will all come, Richard ; just as sure as you now love every living thing.

“‘When I am kind to others, then
I know myself forgiven.’

“Some old hymn says that, and you make me think of it.”
Tears stood in Richard Hathaway’s eyes.

He straightened himself then ; flung away the bits of hay he had been breaking and measuring, and said to Hope as he made a movement to go, and end the talk :—

“I don’t know as I’ve got hold of anything ; but it seems as if I had. You make things look somehow different. If there was only more in me — ”

“I tell you it is *all* in you. You are greater than you know you are,” said Hope, rising and coming down beside him. “And if it wasn’t, you know what He told the woman,—‘Go, call your husband, and come hither.’ It’s all in Him. And when we are close to Him, we are close together, and there’s just one giving for both. And the lines are joined, and it makes,—why, I remember now, Richard, there’s a triangle in *music*! — it makes a clear beat of joy ! ”

Richard Hathaway put forth both his hands, and took hers in them.

“The first thing you ever told me, Hope, was your name. And you’ve been telling it to me ever since,” he said.

Then he let her go, and turned away, down the steep, old stairs.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BLIND FERNS.

ONE day, that spring, Grandon Cope rode over to the Farm.

He had some business with Richard, and went down after him through the fields.

He brought also some volumes of Ruskin for me, and when he came back to the house, he stopped to tell me about them.

“You will thoroughly enjoy Ruskin,” he said. “He goes where you will most delight to follow. He finds the thought that is in things. He does not stop at any cold analysis of art, or technicality of science; he touches, reverently, the great secrets; the Word that is in the world. He tells you of beautiful impulses and limits in tree growths, and their life-instincts seem to you like souls. You stand with him among the mountains, and you feel God.”

“Sometimes,” I said, “I almost think I had better keep out of the mountains.”

I suppose my trouble was in my face, and in my voice.

Grandon Cope looked at me kindly, inquiringly.

“I don’t bring it down. If I were right and true, I should not need to go so high or deep. And things would not puzzle me so.”

I had my fingers upon the books, searching idly among their leaves.

“‘To bring Christ down from above, or up out of the depths?’ No; we know we do not need that. Yet I think such apprehensions as Ruskin’s help and kindle. I think they are a great good in the world.”

“It seems as if I went off, alone, after the best, with a kind of presumption. I ought to find it and live it, *among* them all.

Right here, with Hope, and Martha, and Richard, every day. Hope does. She doesn't need great things. It is always in her mouth, and in her heart. I feel mean and false beside her, pretending to high things, and reaching nothing."

"Hope would like this, too," said Mr. Cope. I think he hardly knew how to understand me.

"Hope has a right to like it. She is real and beautiful, all through.—But I am not thanking you, Mr. Cope. I do, very much; and I shall not be able to help reading, and enjoying, whether I deserve or not.—But I wish,"—I said this after a pause,—“it would be so much less selfish,—I do wish Richard cared!”

He saw through my miserable dissatisfactions, then. He saw where my life halted. He laid his hand upon the books, which I had left.

“Dear Mrs. Hathaway,” he said, earnestly, “don’t read this, or think this, or anything, if it makes you *seem* farther from your husband. You can come near to nothing nobler or truer than he is. Reading and writing are *about* the Eternal Beauty. Living and loving are close to and in it. There are spirits of love, and spirits of wisdom; and the spirits of love are nearest. Heart-truth is the reality; thought-truth only the reflection. ‘Blood is thicker than water.’ These things are water only; drops of the water of life, maybe; but the blood—the love—is the life. Jesus came by the water, and the blood; but it was his blood that he gave for the life of the world.—Richard Hathaway has received of this. He is blood-related to it all. I am filled with reverence when I think what such a grandly real and simple nature will come to in the kingdom of heaven. It was of that childlike directness,—that unconscious, great out-living,—that the Lord said ‘Take heed that ye despise it not; for it doth always behold the Face of my Father.’”

Brave, and true, and generous. Spoken as one soul to another; as few men could or would have spoken to a woman.

A common, indifferent man might have been contemptuous of what he saw in me,—if, indeed, it could have been shown to him, or he could have understood; a true man, self-con-

scious and timid, might have shrunk and been afraid ; a selfish—a bad—a tempted one,—well, women have been near such in their moments of need and bewilderment, and what was I that I should have been safer than they ?

He dared to tell me not to despise. He dared to touch close my hidden unsoundness ; to show me Richard, my husband, as he stood, noble and beautiful, to his perception, and ought to stand to mine. He could see, not a want, but a pure and large awaiting in him, that should be surely and gloriously filled ; he could bid me discern and wait beside it ; if, haply, I might be worthy yet to dwell anigh when the river of God's fulness should flow through.

He dared to do it instantly ; to strike to the very core and marrow of the truth ; to speak to me as Christ spoke to the Woman of Samaria.

" Did you ever see the blind ferns in spring ? As they are looking now, under your walls ? "

I had never seen or noticed them so.

" We are all like that," he said. " Folded up, more or less, according, perhaps, to the tenderness and beauty in us,—till we get above the earth and stones, safe out into the upper air and glory. It is the dream we stand in, side by side, as they do. Some of us have opened a few fronds, quivering, half unfurled ; wondering and shrinking among the roots and thorns ; some stand tall and strong, *reserved* ; kept for a larger and more perfect grace. You must go out and see your ferns, Mrs. Hathaway. They will tell you many things."

He made me ashamed, and yet he paid me a reverence. I was worth being spoken to so. He believed that I desired the truth, and would bear it. And Richard Hathaway could bear being spoken of. There was nothing in him—no lack or absence—that needed to be ignored.

I know I should have hated Grandon Cope if he could have spoken otherwise. That is why I cannot quite understand what happens sometimes, in just such perplexities of women, and just such friendships, apparently, of men.

I went out that next day to see the ferns.

They stood there, all along under the orchard wall, in nooks between the broad, rough stones ; on turfey knolls about the rugged roots of trees.

Hooded, and bowed ; a folded grace, an unrevealed glory. They were like spectres, chrysalids ; unmoving in the soft spring air ; unknowing themselves or each other ; rolled into that strange, uncouth form, giving no sign of what they should be ; fitted only for pushing up into the light that should draw forth their tender, wonderful beauty.

Here and there was one just awaking ; looking timidly round into the new world out of its sleep ; looking upon the blind ones close by, tarrying their change, that was close by also. These saw it not in themselves, what it should be, nor in those, what it was already. They were the freed and the unfreed.

Two or three days more, — what mattered it, the difference or the waiting, then ? two or three days more, — a few rollings of the great Sun through the deep and generous blue, touching patiently leaf after leaf on his spring-path over the greening latitudes, — and they should stand in feathery prime, saluting each other with broad, delicate fronds ; heaping high, beautiful banks of plumy verdure, like clouds of emerald mist rolled up around the stanch old pillars of the trees, and about the pale, gray rocks.

I stood and read.

“ We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

Nothing shall sleep, or wait, forever. We might be patient for ourselves. We might be believing for each other. We might be more gladly conscious of the blessed world to come, which is only a world of light and air about us that we are blind to ; into which some, yet rooted near us, have opened out their perfected life ; opened out into God, in whom also we bide, and shall unfold.

But is this blind biding all, for this world ? Are we all fern growths ? Is that what people are married for ? What they love and long for ? Only to stand, and reach, and grope, side by side, and still alone ? I could not make it answer everything. All living did not seem to me like this.

A step came up behind me. It was Richard.

He asked me what I was doing there ; asked me gently, with the pleasure in his voice there always was at first, when he came upon me anywhere, not having looked for me.

"Are we two like that?" I questioned suddenly, pointing to the ferns.

It was too sudden. I had no business to speak so ; I did not mean to. I do not know why I did ; out of the recoil of my thought, instead of from its first true, fresh impulse. How could he see anything but the folded solitariness, — the estrangement ?

His face changed. The pleasantness died out of it ; quenched, as I had the horrible power to quench it, and the strange fatality to do, in those days.

"I do not know, Anstiss. I cannot follow you in all your fancies. I think it is damp for you to be standing here, and that you had better come in."

I turned and went in with him. What was the use ?

I came down out of my fancies.

I made a tansy-pudding for dinner that day ; the delicate spring dainty that Richard was fond of.

I tried to be happy in the homely, wifely way.

I wonder if he saw that I *tried*. I think he did.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE "NEXT" FOR HOPE.

WHAT was the reason that nothing took hold, or stayed by? That I could look at these things, see them, read them, rejoice even against myself at the truth that was in them, and then turn away into my life, finding it just the same,—making it no different?

'I know now. I began my Bible at the wrong end. I looked in all things for an apocalypse, instead of for a simple gospel. What Richard's mother had said, years before, was true then, and had been true in all my life, ever since. I forgot Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I had got to go back and read through all these, before I could come to Revelation.'

I looked at the truth, and I saw it lovely; but I did not purely and guilelessly enter in. I looked at God. I did not live, like a child, in the great, safe Heart of my Father. I beheld through some of his beautiful signs, as it were my own face in a glass, and went away, forgetting. I did not know that the letter alone, rich and glorious though it might be, should kill me; that the dear and intimate spirit only should give me life. I reaehed after knowledges; I brought back treasures from afar; then I was like the laden camel at the gate of the city; he should sooner go through the Needle's Eye than I should, that way, find the kingdom and the peace everlasting.

All the while, with a love the tenderer for its pain, the truer for its denial, the life at my side was speaking, teaching me; saying always, "And yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

The "might have been!" That stood between. It did,—it did!

Maud Müller was not the first.

Thousands of women,—good, or meaning to be good,—turning swiftly away from the very shadow of evil,—have caught, without looking for it, the strange side-glimpse of this shadow, sent from some far-off or far-back shining.

I knew it might have been. I could not help the knowledge.

I have thought it out in the days since then; the days long since these others that I call up now; in those I should not have dared to think of it deliberately; yet it was in those days that the secret perception came. Did I sin the sin of the heart? I asked and answered myself this, afterward.

The deeper I went on into life, the better I knew, however secretly, how, with a very little, all might have been different.

It would have seemed to me in those first years, long ago, before either of us married, such a strange and great and wonderful thing to have had a love come to me like Grandon Cope's, that I never looked for it; never dreamed a dream from which the awakening would have been shipwreck of hope. It only passed by me near enough for the light upon its golden wings to dazzle me; to leave a pain that I hardly understood, except that it was an ache for a time afterward, in looking upon duller things.

But it did not seem strange to me to have his friendship, now. I knew that he was strongly drawn to me; that he found much in me answering to what I found in him. I knew that it would not have been utterly strange and impossible, given other conditions, that we should have come to be that to each other which man and woman may be, but which, out of the myriad men and women who catch at life haphazard, as it seems,—the myriad men and women born and placed and drifted here and there, apart on the earth and in the generations,—apart by little jolts of misdirection like a blinding fault in a mine when the lead may be close by,—hardly two of a lifetime ever do come to be perfectly; all this thrust itself into my consciousness, deep down, among the things we know and will not know.

I knew that, being true, it was manifest to him also; that

his being upright, and great of soul, and pure of purpose, did not hinder, could not hinder, in Grandon Cope some glimpse of this ; it only took away some of the possibilities that remained.

There are unspoken perceptions like this ; there are things we shall be able to look at in the light of the life to come, that we may not look at now.

But was it a wrong, — a horrible mistake, — my marrying Richard ? Where was the sure instinct, — the spiritual correlation, — if he could love me so, — “ with every thought and fibre of him,” — and I not give him back the like ?

How came Grandon Cope to love Augusta Hare ?

If these are mistakes and wrongs, they are mistakes and wrongs that are every day allowed to be.

Out of all my life, up to this day, I have found but one solution. We make mistakes, or what we call such. The nature that could fall into such mistake exactly needs, and in the goodness of the dear God is given, the living of it out. And beyond this, I believe more. That in the pure and patient living of it out we come to find that we have fallen, not into hopeless confusion of our own wild, ignorant making ; but that the finger of God has been at work among our lines, and that the emerging is into his blessed order ; that he is forever making up for us our own undoings ; that he makes them up beforehand ; that he evermore restoreth our souls.

But I could not think this then.

I could not even live back into what I had lost. Richard was too true, too simple, to understand the vibrations of a double-aspected life ; to see how I could sometimes put away that which was myself, to rest in a quieter, a safer and more bounded self ; how his changeless and faithful strength held me and satisfied me there, as it always had done ; how I longed to be truly and wholly one with him.

He was tender of me, as if he had done me some great harm that no tenderness could make up. Our life moved on with an outer peacefulness ; nobody would have thought that we were ill, or half, assorted. But the gladness, the youth, were gone out ; we were a man and woman walking on through

the middle wilderness ; he had followed me out of the Eden, and kept loyally by my side ; and I had only him.

One day, Mrs. Cope herself came out from South Side to see me. She went little from home, in these days ; she was become an invalid. Her ill health had crept from a negative to a positive condition ; it had been, for years,—always, nearly,—a mere absence of robustness ; of late, people said she was “ failing ;” and her physician counselled change, which had often been of benefit before. She wanted the sea ; she had better go to Europe again.

“ I want a great thing of you,” she said to me. “ A very generous co-operation. I want you to help me to get Hope Devine’s consent to go abroad with me. Laura and Kitty have their homes and their cares ; Augusta and Grandon will perhaps come out and join us for a time, somewhere ; but there are the little boys, and I could not wish, either, to keep them restricted to our quiet plans. I need some one with me all the time ; not a servant, or a nurse, but a friend ; just such a friend as Hope would be. Will you say a word for me ? Will you spare her ? ”

How “ all these things ” were being added to Hope ! How her life flowered out, without her taking thought !

I could recognize a beautiful thing ; a thing that should be ; I was glad for her with all my heart.

“ I am sure she will go,” I said. “ I shall not be able to have any merit in it. I will call her down to see you.”

Hope was upstairs, putting away linen ; we had been looking it over together ; she had taken out some to mend ; it was work that she did delicately.

“ Hope,” I said, coming up behind her, and laying my hands on her shoulders, “ you will have to put back those tablecloths to wait for my darning. There has some other work turned up for you to do. Mrs. Cope has it for you. Will you come down and see her ? ”

“ Mrs. Cope ! — It is some pleasure ! I know your face, Anstiss ! ”

“ I don’t believe you do, — upside down ! ”

She was looking up at me, as I stood behind her, — she sit-

ting on the low cricket before the press drawer, with all the sorted piles about her on the floor.

"It is—'what is going to be done with you next,'" I said, thoughtfully. I began to be curious for Hope Devine. Every turn of her life was a sure move in an unspoiled game; a beautiful development; a touch—whether it were a shade or a high light—upon a picture growing into perfectness, upon a canvas without blot or blunder, under a Master-Hand.

Then she put from her what lay upon her lap, and arose.

"It is something very serious,—very important," she said. "Something with an ought, perhaps an ought not, in it, Anstiss."

So she turned to the looking-glass for a moment, passed her hand lightly across her shining hair, either way, took off her little white apron, and we went down.

Mrs. Cope herself told her what she had come for.

She sat silent at first, when she had heard; she lifted and lowered her eyes, glancing here and there unconsciously, as if she looked for something; she was searching in her mind for the impediment it seemed as if there must be. Could it be so easy and so plain that she should say, right off,—"Yes, I will do this beautiful thing. I will go with you to Europe"?

"Why! I don't see—yet—any reason why not, Mrs. Cope!"

She could not have told her readiness, her appreciation, better than by that surprised allowing.

"But then, I have only begun to see—any of it!" she added, laughing. "How quickly things do happen!"

"Yes; when they happen right," said Mrs. Cope. "You have not asked when, or how long. We shall sail in a month from New York for Southampton; we shall be gone a year,—perhaps two. It will depend on health. We mean to go first to the Isle of Wight; then to Paris, and later in the season to the south of France, to stay awhile among the Pyrenees; in the winter, we shall be in Italy; and next summer, if all goes well, in the Swiss mountains and in Germany. We shall stay quietly in each successive place. It will be living about; not travelling much. Journeys are short in Europe."

"I cannot think how it should come to me!" said Hope.

"You may have much disappointment, after all," said Mrs. Cope. "I may be ill, and need a good deal from you. You may be in the midst of beautiful things and have to forego them. We cannot tell anything that may happen in two years. I only ask you to share my chances, and to help me throughl."

"Dear Mrs. Cope," said Hope, earnestly and simply, "it will be a beautiful thing to be with you. And if I can help you, or do for you,—I hope you will always be sure that nothing can really disappoint me except not answering in that. I should not dare to go if it were not for that. It would be too much to take.—Two years are a long time. Can you and Richard spare me for two years, Anstiss?"

"I am glad to have something that I also can do for Mrs. Cope," I answered. "Only it is not my doing. I could have no right at all to keep you. I can only give you up most cheerfully to her. And Richard,—you know how *he* gives."

"I think it is an ought," said Hope, with tears in her eyes that were like sunshiny rain. "An ought and a may together."

All her life was.

I told her so. "Trouble has nothing to do with you," I said. "I do not think it ever came to you, to stay."

"It may have brushed by me,—in the dark," said Hope.

We were busy after that, in getting her ready.

When we had let her go, we were, for almost the first time, left to our own uninterrupted life together. All the old was gone from me, as I said before; but when the home at New Oxford first broke up, it had given us Hope; now we had quite passed over into what had never really begun before; the sole thing we were sure of,—the belonging, utterly and only, to each other. This hardly ever befalls, so early, with married people. The change comes slowly, to most; it takes years of gradual happening; and all the time, ordinarily, the new life is enlarging, replacing the old before it drops away. With Richard and me, there had been so little to change.

Augusta and her husband travelled that summer, as usual;

they were at the sea-shore, with their children ; they went to Lake George and Saratoga ; they stayed with the Allard Copes, at Edgewater, on the Hudson.

We were busy ; Richard in his fields, I in the house, and in my dairy, with Martha ; our story went on, underneath, but there was no story to tell. Why should there be a story, when we were old, settled, married people ; married these nine years, nearly ?

The only person who saw through this "well enough" of the outward was Nurse Cryke.

We went over there, one day.

She elbowed me aside, up into a corner, when Richard was untying the horse.

"It isn't all straight," she said, standing at right angles, to face me with her exclusive organ of expression. "You and he aint old enough for *this*." She lifted up the shoulder and the flexed arm, slightly, as one might the brows, in questioning significance.

"I only told you he was *part* Grandison, you know. I *told* you you couldn't have the Lord God all in one piece. But you'd better make much of the piece you've *got*. Somehow, the spring's gone out of Richard Hathaway. He's flatted down. And that signifies with a man, more than it does with a woman."

She sent me away with this.

I knew that Richard had not been quite well. The heats had been oppressive, and he had worked hard. He never spared himself. And lately, he had, once or twice, had dyspepsia ; a strange thing, for such pure vigor as his. I did not know that that was how worry begins to kill a man. Begins a long way off, perhaps ; it has to, when there is no weak spot nearer the life.

Richard's life, splendid as his physical manhood was, was a tender thing ; a thing to suffer, like a woman's ; as some women's cannot suffer. Was there a spring deadened ?

A fearful shudder ran through me as the question pressed home. I drew nearer him, sitting beside him in the low, roomy old chaise. We were riding through the wooded road.

"Richard, dear! Are you quite well?"

How his face lightened as he turned round! I always spoke kindly to Richard; it was not that; but my heart went out in the sudden anxiousness of that asking, and he felt it; he who seemed, ordinarily, content without much manifestation; to take for granted, and just to go on.

"Why, yes, Nansie! Why?"

"Oh, I don't think you are! Nurse Cryke doesn't think you look well. And you're all I've got in the whole world!"

He did not take it to mean so much as it did; it would be hard to persuade such delicate humbleness as his, once having turned it back upon itself.

He put his arm about me, though; it made him glad, as far as it went; and he was pitiful of me.

"Poor little woman!" he said. "You *are* lonely. But you needn't begin to borrow trouble about me. Nurse Cryke had better keep her elbows down. I'm well. And I don't think—"

There was a wonderful sweetness in his voice, but he did not finish what he had begun to say.

"I don't think, if I wasn't, I could ever give up and go, while you wanted me."

This was what came up in his heart, and what he had begun to say. But it was put back. It was left upon the Silent Side.

CHAPTER XL.

UNDERTOW.

"O Mis' HATHAWAY!" cried Martha, meeting me at the door. "There's awful news! Jabez has been in to New Oxford, and he see the Copes' man from South Side, so there aint no kind o' doubt about it, I don't suppose. I declare I don't know nothin' how to tell you, or what you'll say! Come into the settin'-room, any way, and lay off your bonnet first, and take it comfortable. Well — there! it's the doom o' livin', and we can't tell, any of us, when our end will be!"

I walked into the sitting-room, to gain the time. The news was almost told. Except for the answer to the fearful question, "Who?"

That I stood still to ask her, though I trembled from head to foot.

"Don't touch the blinds," I cried. She was throwing them open, as a surgeon might do, to get full light for some terrible operation.

Martha had that strange relish for the dreadful which is only satisfied with the last detail, and with watching every point of its effect. "All the particklers, and how they all took it," were what she must know, if such a thing must needs happen.

I pulled my bonnet-strings away from her, as if she had been a hangman, when she came fumbling at my throat to loosen them and make me ready, to the last point, for the stroke.

"I can hear it as I am, Martha. What has happened?"

I thought of Hope. Truly, I thought of her first. I thought also of Grandon Cope. They were the two of whom

South Side news—ill news—would come closest and most terrible.

“It was down at Cape May. They’d gone there with the other Copes, and some folks from New York. They went in bathing, or swimming, or something, all together; and she went too far—”

She!

The next thing I knew of Martha, she had got sal volatile at my nose, and my hair and my bonnet-strings were all wet. She had tipped me back in the great rocking-chair, and put the hearth-brush under the rockers.

“For gracious sake, Mis’ Hathaway! *Do* come to, afore he gets in! There,—as true as I live, I thought you was dead gone!”

“I was only dizzy for a minute; you frightened me so. Tell me the rest.”

“I’m a blessed saint if I do. Why, I hadn’t begun! I never see anybody take anything so. But it *is* awful, that’s a fact.”

“Martha, tell me every word. You are frightening me to death. Was it Mrs. Cope? Mrs. Grandon Cope?”

“I suppose you will have it, now. But I thought you could ‘abore it a little better. Yes; it was Mrs. Grandon Cope; she that was Augusta Hare. She’s always had things happenin’ to her that nobody else ever did, and now this is the cap-sheaf!”

“She isn’t *dead!*”

“She’s *gone*,” said Martha, solemnly. “The first thing they knew was she wasn’t there. Something sucked her under,—some kind of a tide, they say. Or else, it might have been the cramp.”

“Let me up, Martha!”

She took the hearth-brush away, and let the chair return to its natural position.

I sat still a minute, with my face in my hands.

“Is that all?”

I thought they must have tried to save her; I thought some one else might have —

It was awful enough ; but was Martha keeping any more horrors back ?

" Yes. That's all they've heerd as yet. They were watching for the body, miles along all down the shore. They're in hopes the tide will bring it in."

" O Richard ! Augusta Cope is dead ! Drowned at Cape May !" He had heard, from Jabez. He had come in to me.

I burst out crying then. I could cry for Augusta. I think if it had been Hope, or Augusta's husband, — if either of them had gone out of the world, — I should have bled slowly, at my heart.

" Poor little Nansie ! You have a great deal to bear."

Why didn't he say "*my* little Nansie !" as he used to do ? He had left that off.

Many days after, Richard took me over to South Side.

Grandon Cope had come back with his wife's body.

There in the pretty garden-parlor she lay, in a closed coffin.

Shut away, forever. Bruised, dead.

On the black velvet, that fell to the floor around her, lay flowers, — lilies, pure white carnations, tube-roses.

I went in alone.

I shut the door, and stood in the silence. That was what she was in the midst of, now. Silence, mystery. A great secret hushed with her, forever. The greatest thing that ever happened to her was the thing she never could recount. It was the strangest to me, of all. That which she, only, had known ; that which she could never utter.

How she had gone down ; how the great, stealthy grasp of the mighty undertow had taken her ; how the wild sea had surged in at her ears when she went under ; what she had seen in her soul in the luminous instants of going ; how the two worlds touched ; how she slept ; how she waked. Only dumbness.

She was sublime, now ; sublime as the stars in their silences.

There were words said for her ; her name went up to God ; her soul stood with him and heard it.

Wife,—mother,—she had been here ; they prayed for her husband and her little children. What was her new name there ?

I could not think with the prayers. I could only think of the strangeness.

That she should not come back, and tell ! That all this could be, and she be so grandly quiet !

Was she changed, or was she the same self, elsewhere ? Were they gathering round her above, hearing that wonderful death-journey ?

Martha said the same thing, in blunter, less reverent fashion.

"I can't get over expectin' her to come in, and talk it all over. It seems as though she couldn't do nothin' without tellin' folks how ! — But there ! I dare say,—if 'taint wicked to think of it, — it's half over heaven by this time ! "

Grandon Cope was very grave and calm. The shock, the horror, were over before we saw him.

How much *was* over for him ! The life-experiment tried and ended. Joy, or disappointment, or quiet acquiescence ; hopes repressed or hopes fulfilled ; pleasantness, discipline ; all these done with ; all arrested just where they were, with the It is enough ! that only One Breath can utter.

He came over to the Farm ; he came to us for quiet friendship. He brought his little boys, and led them out into the pleasant fields. He was very tender with them.

Richard was tender, too, with the motherless ones. He took them down into the woods and out upon the river. We all went, in the boat, up into the shadows and stillness.

We talked of her ; of her brightness and graciousness ; of her smooth, kind way, that made everybody easy with her. There are always beautiful things that we can say of the dead.

I could not tell, now, what had been wanting, or wrong in,

Augusta. I do not know of any positive mischief, or flagrant selfishness, that she had ever been guilty of; and there was much in her facile, politic ways, her infinite social tact, that made a peace and a sunniness in outward things, wherever she was. But it was not like Hope Devine's sunniness. Augusta smoothed life,—in the little circle that radiated from herself; Hope infused a living blessedness, and induced new centres.

Yet I wondered if "blessed are the peace-makers" might not include, in its broad benison, even such a comfort-giving as Augusta Cope's.

Grandon Cope told us he should take his boys and go out to Europe.

His mother's health, he feared, was hardly better. They would be in Florence for the winter, and he should establish himself near them, and give his time to them and to the teaching of his sons. He would be likely to remain abroad a good while. In a year or two, the boys would be old enough to be placed at the Sillig Institute at Vevey, which was what he had always intended for them.

"I must do all I can," he said, talking with me in the little parlor, the day that he had brought them over for their last visit to the Farm. They were out everywhere, as usual, with Richard.

"I must do all I can for them. If they cannot have the best thing,—home,—they shall have the next best,—a large piece of the full world to gather fruit in. They shall have art, and history, and language *off the trees*; with the juice in them; not boxed up and dried. One cannot be uncheerful, or unsatisfied, Mrs. Hathaway, with other lives to reach out through, and to receive with."

"I count you happy," I said, gravely and earnestly.
"Rarely happy, Mr. Cope."

"You count me rarely happy?" he repeated.

"Yes; I do. Your way is so clear before you,—the thing you ought to do; and you are so strong to do it, always. And then—it may seem a strange thing to say, or I may say it strangely—but to have come to the end—the earthly end—

even of a tie, an affection, *safely*; without great shipwreck or mistake; even in losing, it seems to me that is a joy. We do stumble so; every close relation is such a responsibility; such a possibility of fearful negligence or wrong; we may hurt hearts so, and hinder souls! It frightens me to live, sometimes."

"Do you think I feel that I have done all well? That I have made no mistake or failure? Do you suppose it has always been clear before me? Do you suppose that memory is clean and unaccusing, now?"

"I think you have been true and strong; that is all men and women can be. I think she is safe, and that you can look back in peace, and forward in gladness. It seems to me that that is all this world can help us to. The Now is always mixed and clouded."

"Not if we take it simply as the 'now'; not if we do not ourselves mix it. We mix it with our have beens, or our might have beens, or our by and by. God means it simply for now; the 'manna of to-day.'"

"I cannot separate it; that is where you are so strong. I cannot tell what 'now' is, when all that has come to it, and all that may come of it, is taken out. I cannot even take it always as the 'now' that I was truly meant to come to. How do I know? I have made it, greatly, for myself; for others, too; and I may have made it very badly. The worst 'might have beens' are those that we ourselves have thrust aside, or changed, or passed unheeded."

"God knows a thousand 'might have beens' where we know one; he can look at them all patiently, because—this is the blessedness—he knows a thousand 'may be's' also!—Did you ever think what his thought of us must be?"

"Sometimes I do not see how he can bear to think of us at all."

"Yet every one of us *is* a thought of his, or else we should not be. See here! I wonder if I can tell you; I wonder if I can tell myself, in words, what it has seemed like when it has come closest. Did you go and look at those blind ferns?"

"Yes."

I wondered that he had recollected.

"I think of those because they are such wrapped-up thoughts; that is, because we can see the wrapping so, and we can watch the unfolding. But consider how far back the thought begins; with the little seed — one among a million — under the tender frond; how it waits in that, how it falls with it, — for not one of these, even, can fall without your Father. How, all through the pregnant, quickened earth, beside every particle of its dust, nearly, lies something that has *life*, and that, therefore, God's thought must lie close alongside of and within. Think that whenever a little blade or leaf comes up, it comes up in tender evidence, because it simply could not have been there without him. Think how his Word, so, makes all the world, and has gone out to the ends of the earth. Can you see? Can you believe?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I only know it is warm and beautiful. I don't know how much I do believe — with my heart."

He looked in my eyes earnestly. I think he knew what I meant. I think he saw the glow that came from somewhere, meeting the truth.

He went on.

"Think of our human selves. If God so clothe the grass, doth he not much more clothe us? With what does that mean? Gowns, coats? They stop very short who stop there, in the reading. That which grows out of us; whatever we come to; the shaping, and the placing, and the history; that is the raiment he puts upon us, to see us by, and to make us see each other. And yet — the life is more — the body is more — than the raiment. There is more within and beyond than has ever come forth. More, and better worth. Close to us, close to what there is of any one of us already, is this thought of God, which is his presence, his touch; yet far back, touching also all in the whole world that has had to do with this life, this consciousness — with its being here to-day, and with what from afar off and away back has worked toward it, and tended to make it just where and as it is, reaches his

consciousness for it, which outruns its own ; and away on, to what may be, through all possible conditions, forever. To say that God is with me, that he knows all of me, is to make him infinite *just for me*. And so he is. So he is for every one. Each soul is held in the very heart of his almighty ness, as if there were a separate almighty ness for each. If there had only been one soul, there must have been a God to take care of it."

I felt tears go down my cheeks. I could not say a word. It was rich and beautiful ; warm with the conception of God's love and nearness. I glowed while I heard it ; but — did I feel God so ?

I had come to this close analysis ; I had come to know that I might stand and look at the glory ; that I might catch, with joy, a reflected ray ; that my heart might burn in me, to walk ever so little way beside a life that held itself so beside the Highest ; yet that straight down into my own consciousness the life and the glory might never have come.

I could think of the great, warm earth, turning in the sun-flood ; I could think of little hidden herbs and grasses, and glorious wilderness flowers, each touched with that living thought that was a meaning and a creation ; I could think of little birds in the forest depths, with a Presence about them more brooding than the mother-wing. I could conceive, gladly, that wherever a life was, there was the instant Giver. I could so put God into the world, or the world into him, — as if I were a thought outside the world and him. I could think of souls of men held deep in his infinity ; I could think of myself there — and yet not be there. In the very present life beating in me, could I feel his heart-beat ? Could I say, "Now thou quickenest me ; now thou art with me, and I with thee ; the glory of thy Face is upon me" ?

"I can hear all his word," I said to Grandon Cope. "I know it when I hear it ; but I think it is spoken above me, among the angels. It does not call me by my name ; I believe that my life is in him, as you say ; but it is as one in a reverie, thinking of the place he stands in, forgetting that he is bodily there. The very thinking puts me outside. If I could

wake out of the dream,—if I could leave off thinking and just say, Here am I! and find him round me. How can I find him? How can I come close, and know?"

"At the feet of his Christ."

The man of thought, of power, of insight, said this. The man of science had but this simple answer for me.

"Christ, also, is in the unseen heaven."

"He walked the earth. His life is in it. The Past is Now. He answers you and me in every word he spoke to those Hebrew men and women. We have the commandment and the gift. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and he opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. But we must begin at the beginning; we must come in at the door; we must not climb up some other way. And the beginning is—Do the will. Then my Father will come, and I will come. Do not trouble about *finding*. You shall *be found*."

I asked him no more questions.

He sat a little while, silently, and then got up to go. I rose to say good-by.

It was to be good-by. He would hardly come again. He was to go to New York next week.

He took from his pocket a little parcel, tied in white paper with a silken string.

"This is for you," he said. "It was Augusta's; and I desire for you, as I did for her, that the sign of it may be fulfilled in you. I leave it for you to read, for I know you have the alphabet. And now, good-by."

He did not ask me if I would accept the gift. He did not put it as a gift from himself. It was something that had been Augusta's. He just laid it down upon the table, and turned and took my hand. He held it firmly, warmly, with the long grasp of a friend; then suddenly he let it go.

Between us were a few steps,—the length of the room,—then he was gone out of the house.

The distance had begun; the distance that was to be measured between us over land and sea. The minutes had begun that were to be counted between these last words and any we might ever speak again. The minutes that were to roll them-

selves into hours and days and weeks and months and years ; and fill themselves with life,—working, separating, changing,—between us two.

My friend ! My friend !

He walked down the drive-way. I saw him standing by the garden-fence with Richard. I saw the two men take each other by the hand, and hold each other so, by the length of their straightening arms, as they moved and parted. I saw each lift his hat as he turned away.

There was thorough, warm respect between those two.

A strange thrill of pride in them both — my husband and my friend — came up in me as I looked. Then I took the little white parcel from the table and went away, hastily, into my room with it.

I shut myself in, and sat down, and untied the string.

I held upon my lap a narrow, oblong, blue velvet case. I touched the spring and let the lid fall back. Inside, upon pure white satin, lay the exquisite bracelet, — the most beautiful one I had seen Augusta wear, — of flexible, delicately-linked Etruscan gold ; its chains fastened with “a knop and a flower, a knop and a flower,” in tiniest, most shadowy-fine fretwork ; its clasp a single turquoise of great size, of fairest, unflawed, tender blue. The gem was as large as half my thumb ; convex-oval ; shaped like a shell lying back uppermost, with a ridge along its middle. It was like a little, beautiful, heaped-up wave. Only its color was like the sky.

I knew about it. Augusta was proud of its great value. Grandon had bought it of an Alexandrian Jew, at the great fair at Leipsic. There was hardly another like it in the world.

“I knew the alphabet. He desired its sign to be fulfilled in me.”

The perfect gold ; deep, rich-colored, unalloyed.

Ah, but this gold was fretted ; tortured with workmanship. Its delicate links,—its knobs and its flowers, subtilely twisted,—how had they been drawn, and bent, and wrested, and pained !

Was that why the gold of the altar must be made holy with “beaten and cunning work”? The metal that could purely

endure,— was that the type of soul-substance God loved to deal with,— out of which he shapes his cherubim?

Only the purest could be made thus beautiful. That is the value and the proof.

Held, and clasped, and finished with the stainless blue.

I did not so much as touch it with one of my fingers. I shut down the lid, and laid it away from me.

Augusta had worn it complacently. Could not people read the meanings of these things they bind upon themselves and placidly appropriate? The fine-twined linen, and the blue, and the purple, and the beaten gold? How do we dare?

I do not know how my thoughts ran on then, or whether they stood still.

All at once,— it was a good while first,— something said in me, or I said in myself — (in these silences how do we know who speaks?) :—

“He will go out there.— He will go out and marry Hope!”

I felt the words. I heard them plainly in myself. I could not turn away from that, nor from the pain-shot that went through me as they came. I knew that I was out beyond the breakers. I knew the undertow had all but got me, then.

I started up upon my feet. I stood still, as it were, with all my might.

“*What if he does!*” I cried out, aloud, defying myself.

I lifted my foot, and struck it down upon the floor, as if I trampled something underneath. .

“I will not be this thing!”

“Shall I forfeit my soul for a shred, a shadow of a mere garment that my life might have put on,— but that it never did, and never may? Shall I grieve and spoil a better soul than mine?— Where shall I get help to take this out of me before it grows?”

“At the feet of his Christ.”

I heard that too.

I went down, then, upon my knees. In the middle of the floor, where I had been standing.

I felt as if I were in the wide pavement of the temple. I felt as if He sat before me. I felt as if one, but a little worse

than I, had gone away, leaving the place empty for me to come. It seemed as if the pity had not yet gone out of His eyes.

“Christ, I come to thee for cleansing! Save this life of me, that is more than raiment!”

CHAPTER XLI.

SAVED ; YET ——

THEY were out on Red Hill.

It was a Sunday afternoon in September.

The air was at once crisp and sweet. Summer sent her slant light along the earth, most beautiful as she slid away, down to the waiting zones below; as the waning afternoon gives back a level glory more intimate than the noon tide splendor.

They had been to church in the morning. After dinner, Richard had slept. Anstiss found him, as she sometimes did in these days, lying on the cool, broad sofa in the open hall. "Resting a minute," he would say when she asked him. But Richard Hathaway had not been used to rest.

She went and made some cool lemonade to give him when he should awake.

"It did him good. It brightened him; that, and his nap," she said to herself, as she took away the glass when he had drunk it.

It was her thought of him that brightened him. She had thought so much of him, in every little way, lately. She had always been kind and dutiful; but these last weeks it had been more as he was used to think for her.

"It is almost as if her very, whole heart was in it," he said to himself. "It is almost as if I were enough for her."

Anstiss Hathaway had her husband to win over again. Not his love; that never changed. But she had to persuade him — silently; by living, not by words — that her love, wholly and truly, might yet be his; that these years of their married life had been but a part of their history, — the history of

their heart-growing toward each other ; that their beautiful, perfect moment was yet to come.

There are many marriages that are like this ; many in which the story ends darkly, just because they do not see that it is only telling, not all told.

“ Shall we go to walk, Nansie ? ”

“ Do you feel like it ? ”

She was afraid he would do it just for her.

“ Yes. Just like it. I should like to go over to Red Hill.”

“ That is a ride.”

“ And a walk after the ride. Wouldn’t you like it ? It is pleasant weather for Red Hill.”

“ If you think you are quite able.”

“ Of course I am able. What a funny ‘ if ’ that is, Nansie ! ”

Some people are “ of course ” always able, as others are equally, of course, always unable. It seems to be so set down for them and accepted ; and it takes a long time for themselves or for others to change the attitude or the impression,—of ability, especially. It would take a long time for Richard Hathaway to come to considering his steps.

So they were out on Red Hill.

Anstiss had a basket full of mosses and lichens, gathered as they came up. She had been straying about here, upon the broad hill-top, picking up more.

She came and sat down by Richard.

It was on the self-same flat shelf of gray stone, with the rest below for their feet, looking toward the great, open west filling with glory, where they had sat ten years before ; when she had told him “ never to mind ; they would just have a good time.”

Was that what she had come to, with the hard, restless life-question ? With her little basket of mosses, red, gray, pearly and green, and that pleased face ? Was she just making the best of it, at last ?

“ She looks almost like a happy woman. She is trying to be. Poor Nansie ! It is like when she was a little girl, with

her little, pale, thin face, and her short, stiff hair, that Miss Chism would keep cut,—tying on wreaths of shavings down in the shop, and wearing them for curls. She is trying to make it do. Brave little Nansie! What a woman she would have been if it *had* done!

“She has tried before. I’ve seen it. And it’s been no use. It’ll be no use again, perhaps. I don’t count it for myself, any of it,—only the goodness. I thank her for that in my very heart. I shall tell her so, when I get where I can tell things. If I went first, perhaps I could say it to her, in still times, when she is happy, and out of her happiness sends back some pitiful, tender thought to me. Perhaps I could *do* for her then. Perhaps I could make things come,—some of them,—as they ought to come for her. Maybe that’s what I’m put alongside of her now for; to love her, and to find out.

“I think I shall go first. I think I ought to. I think that’s the way it’s meant, most likely. It’s all planned out, better than I could plan it. And then it’ll be forgiven me, maybe, that I tied her to me so, here, for a while.”

Anstiss was laying out the mosses on her lap; putting the deep, rich-colored ones, with cups and spires, alongside the delicate, misty, pale-green pieces, and against these again, the full, velvety, emerald mosses proper that she had found in the low woods. Among them, and overlapping them also, she heaped, as she came to them, the silvery flaked lichens, such as the humming-bird thatches her nest with, and all the varied browns that one hardly believes are, until one searches for them, and finds how curiously and untiringly the beauty and the manifoldness are put even into these simplest growths,—these mere gatherings of time and of decay.

It was a pleased face, still with content, that she bent over these. Not such a face as had searched the far clouds for their colors and their meanings, that night ten years ago; yet it looked afar also, into depths of tender minuteness, as it held itself above these things from underfoot that were tinted with the same touches that wrote the word in lines of fire across the heavens.

Near things.

That was what she was thinking, saying to herself. Little, and near, and every-day things. The meaning is in these also. And the gift and the joy as well.

Near doing, and near living, and near loving, — these life-particles make the great heaven, as the little, polarized atoms of light, all magnetized one way, make the great blue in which the stars burn forever. Each point is intense and perfect azure, even if it were alone. Each soul, purely poised, is a heaven ; and they all are “the body of heaven in his clearness,” wherein the Throne of God is like unto a sapphire, “above the firmament that is over their heads.”

She was willing, at last, to be a soul-particle ; to be glad with all souls in the joy of the Lord.

She drew closer to Richard’s side. She took up little bashful, loving ways with him, as if, true-pointing now herself, she felt, like the needle of a crystal, the true-pointing that was in him, and that set them closer, side by side.

These ways of hers were like a beautiful torment to him.

“ If it could only really be ! ” he thought. “ If she did not have to try ! ”

He looked down at her, putting his arm about her, letting her rest so.

There came a bright little gleam of a smile, climbing suddenly up into her face. It seemed happy, and it seemed amused.

“ What is it, Nansie ? ” he asked, as he looked down and met it.

“Zaccheus, he
Did climb a tree,”

she answered, out of the Primer.

“ And, you see, he need not have done it. That is what it means, I think, instead of altogether to praise his zeal. He thought he must climb high, to see the Lord. But the first thing Jesus says to him, when he sees him there, is to call him down. ‘ I will abide in thine house,’ he tells him. — I’ve just noticed it, as Hope says.”

“ You are growing like Hope, somehow,” said Richard.

"Am I, Richard? Then I am growing fitter to be your wife."

Fitter to be his wife! Why, that was the other way! Could she be thinking like that? She looked so glad, too, when he said it. He could see, as it were, a quick pulse of joy in her eyes. The blue of them grew deep, as if color surged up into them.

"Do you know, Richard, I have thought a good many times, that Hope ought to have been your wife? And I think,—not that she let *herself* think of it, or be sorry; that is not Hope's way,—but I think she might have been, naturally, if you had asked her instead of me."

"I did ask her, Nausie."

He told his wife this, after those nine years. He said it almost before he thought.

"Richard!"

"She was too true to me to take me. I asked her when I had no hope of you. And yet—

"I should have gone on loving you all my life."

That was what was behind the yet; but she did not know it. He stopped there. Why, this was strangely like love-making again,—and they, old married people! How came their talk to run of this fashion? He stopped himself at that "yet" like a lover who did not know how it should be taken.

She wondered, troublosly, what had been behind it. She was as shy to ask as she would have been nine years ago. She was slowly loving, and slowly winning, him again, as if she had been a girl. Slowly finding out, that is, that she could "love much;" hoping also to be forgiven much; slowly beguiling him to believe.

Is it a strange story?

How pretty Anstiss was to-day! Prettier at twenty-nine than ever. Something like the changefulness of girlhood, trembling and flushing with half-formed thoughts, showed itself in her glance, her color.

Some sort of peace, some touch of wonderful rest, also, had come over the unrestful, feverish nature, these last two months. Richard did not know. Only she herself, and He to

whom she came, in her struggle, her pain, her sin,—knew how it had been. He had put forth his hand and lifted her up, and the fever had left her, and she rose to do sweet ministering; to earn her life again.

If only Richard would keep well! If she could only have time!

Was it but two months? She seemed to have lived so long since that day when Grandon Cope came there and bade her good-by, and left her with the storm in her heart. So much had slid back, and seemed long past already; because she had so utterly let it go. So much had hushed itself within her, and so much was wakening, as into a sweet, new morning.

"I will take this life that Thou hast given me, and I will live it out with my hand in Thine. I will thank Thee for it every day. I will trust Thee for what it shall come to, with both of us,—souls just begun, as we are. I will love that in him that Thou art making; I will trust Thee, gladly, for what Thou art making in me. Speak Thy word unto me daily, and keep me clean!"

It was with a prayer like this God saved her.

But sometimes a terrible dread came over her,—a foreshadowing thrill. Might she be saved, "so as by fire"?

Might Richard go hence, into the glory; be clothed, suddenly, with his great, waiting angelhood, and leave all this little life of his, with its love and its pain, behind him? Leave her, in her unworthiness,—her sin unatoned? Would God deal thus with her?

She could not bear that. She could not look at that thought long.

"Forgive, as we forgive each other," she cried; and the plea was a promise. "Undo and abate all that can be undone and abated, as we would when we truly forgive."

And so she hoped again.

In the silence between these two the depth of their life was flowing.

They got up to go down the hill again.

All down in the meadows was the golden, rolling mist of the sunset. The tops of the trees moved in it, and the clouds

waited, above, till the level glory should slide down over the horizon, and its shafts slant upward to make them splendid after the earth was dark.

They did not talk much on the way. Anstiss was learning to feel her husband's soul in the stillness. She was not restless for words, as she had been. But Richard,— he thought she was learning to do without.

They had got almost to the foot of the hill, to where the horse waited, when Richard suddenly stopped, leaning up against a tree. His face turned pale, so that it shone out in the gathering dusk.

Anstiss sprang to his side.

He could not speak, at first; he only smiled, as she looked up at him in a terror.

"It is only a dizziness," he said then, the color coming back partly, and he moving to go on. "I have it sometimes. And my head has ached to-day. It was better up there on the hill."

"Richard! Richard! don't let it ache! Don't be dizzy,— don't be sick! You were always well,— till I worried you!"

And Anstiss put her arms up over his shoulders, and burst out crying.

"Why, little Nansie! Do you care like that?"

He grew strong, then, all of a sudden, as he had grown faint. He put her into the chaise, and got in beside her.

"We'll go home and get some tea. We shall both be all right, then."

But Richard was not all right in the morning. For the first time in his life he could not get up and dress. His head was heavy with pain, and his eyes were feverish and bloodshotten. His limbs all ached. There was a strange dreaminess in his brain. Things did not seem real to him.

Did they seem real to his wife?

Real as the day of judgment.

"It's nothin' more than I expected," said Martha Geddis. "It's ben a draggin' on him all summer long. Now he's got to wrastle it out. And it's which'll beat, fever or man. You an' I has got our hands full, Mis' Hathaway."

CHAPTER XLII.**SO AS BY FIRE.**

"Be not deceived. God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

God might forgive, but I must suffer it out.

Those awful, inexorable words stood by me like angels of doom.

Sometimes he knew me; sometimes he smiled. Sometimes his gaze was all wide and wild. Fever had him. He was not my Richard any more. He was a soul in the deep, lone struggle with death. I could only stand by.

I could not say my heart to him; not any of it, ever again. I could only give drink to his lips, and smooth the pillows for his dear head, and sit like a still, cursed thing, through the midnights, bearing my sentence.

"He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully, with tears." Was that true? Did God punish so?

Where was the Christ who had forgiven me? I could not find him, then, in the darkness. I was all alone; and there was my husband, going out of the world; passed, already, beyond my touch.

We kept him in a perfect hush. •

If he were dead, I could have cried to him. I could have prayed God to give him my messages. But I could say no word to him now, lest he *should* die; lest that should determine what I believed was determined already.

If he were gone, he would come back to me, perhaps; to his poor little, suffering, contrite wife. I did not think he could stay away, even in heaven. But he was so far away, now! Tossing on that great deep of pain; withdrawn from this life;

not taken into the life eternal. I almost longed for the days and nights to be over ; for what should come, to come.

I could not say one word to God. Was that because my whole soul was one awful agony of prayer? It just lay bare and wretched before him. What would he do with it? Would he ever send one word of peace into it again? Was I already in the outer darkness?

His sister came, and his brother. They wanted to help me. Everybody wanted to help me. They tried to make me go to bed, and sleep. They said I was doing too much ; that I should not hold out. I knew I should have to hold out ; that souls did hold out, to bear all their punishment.

I heard John Hathaway tell the doctor, " His wife is giving up her life for him."

They thought I was a good, self-sacrificing wife. Why, I knew that I had killed him !

I almost laughed when I heard such things. If I had laughed, I should have gone mad. I knew how near I came to it. But God kept my senses, too ; all my power to see and suffer it through.

Then, after days and nights, it began to grow dead and old. I knew I had got something awful laid away, to look at and to bear, by and by. But I had borne all I could, just now. I went on with a kind of mechanical persistence. I made gruels, and beef-tea ; I measured cordials ; I dropped medicines ; I sat and watched at night, except when they put me down on the sofa in his room, and made me lie there for an hour.

I kept it all in my heart, — all I had to say to him, and that he would go away and never hear ; I should have it to keep for years and years and years, perhaps, till God would let me die and come and say it there. I thought he would let me say it there, just once ; let me speak to him one moment, even if he sent me right away again, forever. I thought impiously and fiercely, that I *would* say it. And then I remembered how easily I was being hindered here. Yes ; I was in the mighty Hand of the Living God. I could writhe and cry ; but I could only have what he would give me.

There came a night, at last, when he lay, — oh, so still ! No feverish tossing, no wild talk, only dead prostration. The fever had gone ; but the life was gone with it ; wasted and burnt away. I saw the moment when the doctor gave him up. I saw it, exulting. Now he was mine again for the little that was left.

And his eyes knew me. I saw that.

I would have him all to myself this last night. I would say it to him when he should be dying. He should go straight to God with my repentance and my prayer.

I told them that I would have it so. I would watch alone with Richard to-night.

They argued against it ; they began to. I hushed them with one word.

“ I shall die if you do not let me.”

I said it very quietly,— faintly. For the life was almost going out of me. I had no strength for dispute ; only for doing this one thing.

“ I believe she says the truth,” said the doctor ; and then they gave up.

I spoke with the doctor before he went away :—

“ Tell me one thing. Will anything make any difference ? Can I say something to him, if he can hear ? ”

“ Anything you please, Mrs. Hathaway. I do not think it can hurt him now.”

No. I had hurt him all I could. Nothing could hurt him now.

Nobody said it to me ; it came ; brought to my remembrance. The Spirit of God said it. One after another, things joined themselves together and came into my mind.

I had wanted a prophet ; a soul to love me that could see great things ; a soul that stood nearer to the Great Wisdom than E.

“ Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist ; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

"The kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"He who shall keep the least of these my commandments, and teach men so."

"Let them see your good works, and glorify your Father."

"And these are the works of the flesh : adultery ; uncleanness ; idolatry ; witchcraft."

False love ; false worship ; false spirituality.

"But the works of the Spirit are these : love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness."

Where had the Spirit been, between us two ?

I set my life and soul alongside his,—my patient, great-hearted husband's. God let down his light upon them. Which shone forth as the sun ? Which stood nearest ?

I had repented before of that which the devil brought me near to being ; I repented now, seeing in awful clearness that which I had not been.

I watched, in silence ; all this went through my soul while I kept count of the time, while I was instant to the second with each restorative, the teaspoonfuls that kept life in him. Between times, I slid to my knees before the great white easy-chair beside his bed, and let God look at me ; to see if there were anything amidst this evil in me that he could pity and save..

I would not break his quietness ; his possible rest ; not even for that only thing that could save me from despair,—his word of forgiveness. But I prayed that he might speak to me, some time in the long hours of this night ; that I might be able to say that to him which I thought I should die a soul-death if I did not say.

The first hours after midnight had been his most unquiet ones, hitherto ; he had talked and wandered most, then. I watched for these to see how it would be to-night.

The old clock below in the hall gave its three-minute warning. I heard it through the heavy stillness. I waited, as if for an axe to fall.

The single stroke came,—more solemn than the stroke of midnight. The hours had begun again.

Richard turned his head. His face was toward me, now. Only the thin drapery of the bed between us, as I sat there in the great chair. I bent down close. I could hear him breathe.

I knew he was awake. Oh, if he had waked calmly! If he could hear! If he could only be *with me*, one moment, before he went away!

I heard him say my name; low, feebly, in a whisper; like a thought of me; not a call.

"Nansie. Nansie."

And then I heard him whispering to God.

"Father Almighty, make up to her what I have made her lose! And make me, in thy heaven, more fit to love her, and be with her, when she comes!"

Then I cried up to Him, aloud.

I fell down there beside Richard, my husband, whom the heaven must not shut in from me. I stretched my arms out over him to keep him. I felt after the Power that raiseth whom it will. I clutched for the hem of the garment. I believed, mightily, in the Christ who came to just such awful needs.

"O God! If ever a life was raised up in the name of Jesus, give me back my husband now. For I do love him so, and I do so repent! Leave me not to live without him, yet!"

His hand — Richard's — came over gently, till it found my head.

"Nansie, — *dear* little Nansie!"

We had prayed ourselves heart to heart. Before God, in that terrible hour, we had found each other.

I think he had thought that he must die for me.

But his love was so great, so strong, that it had power even to live for me. He turned in that moment, and came back from death. The life in him heard that cry of mine, like Lazarus in the tomb; and, bound as it were with the very grave-clothes, it came forth.

I held him as if my life and will could kindle his. I knelt there, with my arms over him; his hand upon my head, until

the clock struck two. Every little while, came that loving whisper, like the reaches of a returning tide.

"My dear little Nansie!"

He called me his again.

Then that double stroke warned me. I softly loosed myself from him and arose. I went and brought the cup from which I fed him. More than the hour had gone by, since I had done it last. But I could not have moved before. Not while his hand lay so restfully upon my head, and his lips kept breathing "Little Nansie!" If there were good in any giving, he was receiving from me then.

I gave him the one spoonful, now.

"More," he said, softly.

Joy sobbed up in my throat, as I gave him two and three. His *will* was with my prayer. He was resolving to get well. God's will be with us both!

When the daylight came in, he was asleep, his hands held fast in mine.

Some one crept softly to the door, and looked in upon us. It was Mary.

I shook my head gently, without turning, and she went away.

He slept until the sunshine was broad upon the entry floor, shining in at the little crack of the just open door.

I kissed him when he woke, and gave him warm beef-tea that Mary brought me.

Fifteen minutes after, I met the doctor at the stairhead.

"He is alive. He has spoken. He has eaten. He has slept."

And then I fell upon the good old man's neck, and sobbed and shook with all that night's resisted passion.

Richard got well. Because he could not go and leave me so. It was truly the love that is stronger than death. The love that can *come back*. The very power by which the Lord took up his life again, and returned unto his own.

But one day when he could talk more, Richard said this to me; half as if he ought not to have been persuaded:—

"I cannot ever—I never have—given you the best, Nansie. Some one else might have. I took you covetously, I am afraid. You belong higher. I know that. I knew it when I came so near,—when I saw clearer what the best was."

"I saw clearer too, Richard. I saw the best; and I saw it in you. But the real, *whole* best is in God. We both belong higher. It is by the life we touch in him, that we find each other. That is the counterpart and the complement. There is one Great, Perfect Marriage; and the bride is the New Jerusalem.—We are only little pieces, Richard. But we are little pieces that belong side by side."

CHAPTER XLIII.

INDIAN SUMMER.

THE Indian Summer came in November ; the ripe, warm days when all the air was like rich, fragrant wine ; when the smoke of the great earth's thankful incense went up in the sunlight ; when after the hymn and the prayer of the joy and toil come down the perfect benediction and the peace.

I went out every day with Richard. I drove him long drives, out over the beautiful country, among the sunny hills. I walked with him up the open orchard, and along the slopes of the sweet, resting fields.

One day,—a day I had watched and waited for,—we went up the river ; floating in the soft haze between sky and stream, in sun and shadow, up into the dream-land, that was more a beautiful dream than ever.

Richard was strong enough to row down. We took a boy to row us up, and then be sent back across the fields. I wanted to be alone with my husband again in the beauty he had brought me to that first day so long ago. I had a word that I must say to him there.

The river was set with gems. The deep, dark water was like agate, laid between heaped and clustered stones. Amber and topaz and carbuncle and ruby ; fiery gold gleaming here and there ; the dropped leaves lay upon the banks, and floated, piled upon each other, in the still curves. It had been a sweet, lingering autumn. The fierce winds had not come yet ; nor the long, sad rains.

Up over the low-spread splendor, opened the wide, soft sky. Through the thinning branches of the trees came down the last, most tender kisses of the sun. But the deep banks held us in the old, beautiful seclusion. The warmth came

down for us, and the still gorge gathered it in, and held it, a river above a river, a tide of glory filling it up to the brim. We seemed to breathe the sunlight. The life we drew into us was golden. It was the mystic elixir men had tried to make, resolving it back from its most concrete form.

Richard drank great breaths of it. He took off his hat, and let the sunshine lie among his hair. He looked grand and beautiful to me with his bared head, blessing coming down upon it. He bared his soul, in like wise, quietly; and I knew now how God's light found it. The joy was there; we were both in it; it was enough.

When we sent the boy away, and lay there under the shelving rock, where some late-surviving creeper flung its embrace of flame over the cedar branches and along the moss-warm stone, it seemed almost as if I waked there out of a long, dim dream that had lain between that first day of our marriage and this that we were keeping now. As if a great Mercy had rolled back the years, having shown me what they might have been, and set me again at their fair beginning.

How do we know how much of these lives we live is just a showing, like that? It feels so to us, often.

I had a word to say to Richard.

"We *must* be married," I had said to him that day. I said that to the man I had stood up with twenty-four hours before, solemnly taking him for my wedded husband; with whom I had gone to his home to live with him. And he had said to me, simply and nobly,—what I must now say to him. There had been all these years between the two sentences of our marriage service.

"Some great thing is in your face, Anstiss," said Richard.

I knew there was. I felt it crowding to my cheeks and eyes.

"Will you believe it, if I say it?"

"I believe you, always."

"What do you believe me? What am I to you, Richard? Tell me truly."

"My dear and faithful wife."

"Is that all? But 'faithful' is a great word, too. Does

it hold all it ought to, when you say it so? What is *faithful*, Richard?"

"It is good, and kind; and,—yes, I do believe,—content."

He put his hand upon my cheek, lovingly, as he might upon a child's; stroking it down, and looking into my eyes.

Content! That was all I had made him believe yet!

"Do you know what you said to me here, nine years ago?"

"Troublesome things, didn't I?" he asked me, smiling.

He would not come back. He would not think that moment could be for him again, with more in it; with no defrauding.

"You said,"—I turned my face to him with eyes bent down and glowing cheeks, glowing with the word of the strong man's love that I remembered,—“that you were ‘married to me, through and through, every thought and fibre of you.’ Then we were half married. Richard, I want—to say my half to-day. There was not enough of me, then, to say, or to know it. I think there is beginning to be more, now. And I can say it. All there is of me does, just so, belong to you. There is not a thought, or a wish, that could go anywhere else. Do you believe me, now?"

How could he help believing me? When I had been nine years in making sure?

Before I had finished, he had his arms about me. And when he held me back again, and looked in my face, there were great, honest, happy tears standing in his eyes.

I did not think I had half said it, after all. Half answered this large, perfect patience; this generous love that had been always there, waiting, like the Lord's.

I had not. I should always be nine years behind him. I had it all to live,—to prove; the chords, between which lie the harmonies, are struck in marriage hours; the full, beautiful theme is played out in the years.

Who thinks the story is all told at twenty? Let them live on, and try.

I was half through my thirtieth year, and Richard was eight years more, and we had just come to this.

The Indian Summer had just touched our lives.

For God gives grace. There is no good thing — not even the right and lawful love — that he will withhold, if we do ask him with a true and sole desire; not having a secret mind to any other. He may give it through fire and tears as he gave me; yes, even the fire and the flood may not be stayed. But we must dare ask, even for that. Dare to say, "Through whatsoever way Thou wilt; only up; up into perfect purity and truth!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

FROM OVER THE SEA.

It was one day that winter, that Richard came home from New Oxford, bringing me news.

Richard brought news, as he did other things; in little parcels, put away in different pockets; to be brought out one bit at a time.

The first news was sorrowful; yet only what we had for some time expected. Mrs. Cope had died at Florence.

“Now, Mr. Cope will come home.”

“Yes, he is coming.”

“Hope will be back again!”

“Has Hope written you anything about herself lately? Or her plans?”

“Hope? Plans? Why, no. What plans should she have? She never did have plans. She just kept on doing, and let things happen.”

“Something *has* happened to Hope, Nansie.”

“Happened! O Richard! Not any harm?”

“No. I don’t think so. A change. It seems sudden, though, hearing of it all at once.”

I could not think what he meant. Would she leave Mr. Cope? Would she not come home? Had she joined some other people who had come to know her, and wanted her, perhaps? To be sure, how could she very well stay with Mr. Cope, all alone? And yet, how could she leave him alone?

“Why, dear little woman, you are all abroad!” said Richard, as I confusedly asked myself and him these questions. “I shall have to break it to you — as people do break things — in one great smash. They say that Hope is married.”

“Married! O Richard! So soon!”

"Soon, you blessed child! What do you call soon? Hope is eight and twenty, isn't she? How long would you have her—or somebody else that she is saved up for—wait?"

"Oh, not that! But—Augusta. It is only a few months. I could not think—"

I could not think of any thing but one. And truly,—in the midst of my bewildered surprise, I inwardly thanked God for that,—I thought of it just as I said.

"Think what?" said Richard. "What did you think, or not think?—Did you suppose it was Mr. Grandon Cope?"

"I thought he and Hope would marry—some time."

Richard laughed. A great, glad laugh; it was not only as if he were amused at me; it was as if something lifted itself wholly and forever off his heart, at that moment, when I spoke those simple words.

"Well, they won't," he said. "At least, not very probably. See here."

He showed me a New York newspaper, that he had got in town. He folded it over, and pointed to the list of arrivals by the steamship Cambria, from Liverpool.

There were ever so many names that were strange to me, of course. My eye ran down these, hastily, searching for short syllables that I knew.

"H. G. Cope, and servant."

That was all. Then came strange names again.

"Alexander Upfold. Mrs. Upfold and maid."

I let the paper drop, under my hands, upon my lap. It told me nothing.

"There's a letter," said Richard, in his dear, provoking way, touching me with it under the chin, as I bent down, half crying with puzzle and impatience, over the crushed-up sheet. "Perhaps that will tell. My news is only hearsay."

It was addressed in Hope's own, clear, beautiful hand.

I turned right over to the end of it, as some silly people turn to the end of a book.

"Hope Upfold."

The letter had been begun in Florence, more than six weeks

ago. It told me the first news, as soon as she had known it herself.

"It just came to me," she wrote, in her old, quaint fashion. "I had it before I knew. But there was a beautiful feeling in the world, somehow, before that, though I did not stop to see what it was. I have been very busy, you know, with Mrs. Cope. She was very ill at Lago Maggiore, and we were late in coming away. He found us there again; he had been with us in Rome, and he has always been so kind. Everything was always pleasanter when he came. He brought things to us that we could not go after. It seemed to me all Rome came in little bits,—of talk, and things to see and talk and learn about,—into that pleasant, high, balconied room, out of which Mrs. Cope could so seldom go, and where I could not often leave her alone. When there was only Mr. Cope, he could not do so much for me, because we could not both be away. But when Mr. Upfold came, he seemed to make everything easy. He would have a book, or a picture, or fresh news, or fruit and flowers to bring in to her, and make her cheerful with, and to brighten up Mr. Cope. So then she would spare me. And he took me about. He said he wanted to see what I should 'notice' in Rome. He picked up that little word of mine, and made so much of it! I hardly ever dare to say it now.

"Do you know, he never forgot the little talk we had that night at Mrs. Holgate's, all those years ago? He says I planted something in him then, and took possession, as people do with land, to claim it; and that the something has been growing ever since. I can't tell how that may be, but a great deal has been planted some time!"

"You would like Mr. Upfold, Anstiss."

"How strange it is, if I did take possession then, that we have both come half round the world to find each other, and to find out about it, now!"

"I don't think he could have really known, any more than I did. It makes me think of the man that 'planted seed in a field, and slept and rose, night and day, and the seed came up

and grew, he knew not how.' We do not ever know what is growing for us, do we?

"I do not know what we should have done at Lago Maggiore, if it had not been for him. That was before Mr. Grandon Cope came, you know. And then, when we came on to Florence, he came with us, and all the old pleasantness began again. And so — the other day only — he told me this that I have been telling you — and all the rest of it.

"It has come to me, — just *given*. And now I do not see how I could have gone on with the rest of my life if it had not come.

"I am very happy, Anstiss."

The letter broke off here, and was not sent. Mrs. Cope was ill again, fearfully ill ; and then Mr. Cope broke down. Grandon was there then ; but Alexander Upfold stood by them all, with his love and help, all through the hard, sad time ; till the end came ; till the last faithful ministering was given, and the dear friend was laid at rest.

She was buried there, at Florence. It was her own wish. She knew that if she did not ask this, they would bring her home ; and she knew that this would be such a terrible duty.

"Think of me here," she said, "*resting* among the beauty. Let me lie down where the peace comes upon me, and think of me so. It will be better."

So they did as she said ; and then Hope was alone with Mr. Cope ; except for Grandon, who had his little sons to hinder his perfect freedom. He came with them as far as England on their return, and there Hope and Mr. Upfold were married. Hope sent her letter, filled up with all its sad and sweet completion, by the steamer just before the one in which they sailed. It only got to me as she arrived in New York.

We talked about it as people do talk of things. Over and over ; trying to take hold of it closer, by every little corner of circumstance.

We talked of Hope's new name. We could not, somehow

bear to give up the old, beautiful one that she was sent into the world to live.

Yet "Hope Upfold" sounded to me full and sweet and noble, too. Lifted and cherished; clothed also with new lifting and cherishing power for others. Yes; Hope Upfold also was a beautiful name.

"It never *could* have been that other man, you see," said Martha Geddis. "It stands to reason. Hope Cope! Who ever went and rhymed themselves up after that fashion, I should like to know? I alwers knew it wouldn't be, for all folks said,— and they did say things when he went out to Europe after his folks, and she there with 'em. I alwers knew it never'd do, after I put them two names together in my own mind, and took just one single squinny at 'em."

"Marriages *are* made in heaven," said Nurse Cryke. "But folks don't half see what that means, either. The Lord takes 'em in hand; and he works slow. He don't make a marriage, any more than he made the heavens and the earth, right off, *slap*, in one day. He takes two people, and he marries 'em *all along*. Sometimes they're a good deal married, in the very beginning; and sometimes it's *years* first; and sometimes he don't get through with 'em as long as they both live. And yet folks expect it all at once, and just to sit down and enjoy it — here. And they make themselves miserable if they think there's anything better in this great grab-bag of a world that they might have lit on, and didn't! As if they were bound to get the very best, or else they hadn't made out. They needn't *worry* nor *pucker*; the making out is *further on*." And Nurse Cryke's elbow elevated itself with a right-angled rush as if it were an inspired guideboard, set direct to the exact point in the Far-off where the making out would be.

Hope saw much, and I told her something more, of how it had been with me; how it was with us now, in our home.

"And yet," I said to her, talking one day of these things, "I can't understand it for everybody, Hope. Not even according to Nurse Cryke's doctrine. There would have been

no excuse for me. But there are lives, — there are marriages, — we see them sometimes, — where there is nothing to cling to ; where it is all terrible loss and mistake and wretchedness, all the way through. It is still the problem of the world. When a *soul* is tied to some mere brutish thing, in the shape of man or woman, — what then ? ”

“ Then,” said Hope, “ this living is only a little piece, after all. Then one can bear ; for the sake of a Love that bore all terrible contradiction of sin against itself ; for the sake of what that Love sees, and bears with *by* us ; for that for which also even the meanest one is “ apprehended of Christ Jesus.” For the By and By. — I saw in Rome, once, Anstiss, an old coin, — a silver denarius, — all coated and crusted with green and purple rust. I called it rust ; but Aleck told me it was copper ; the alloy thrown out from the silver, until there was none left. Within, it was all pure. It takes ages to do it ; but it does get done. Souls are like that, Anstiss. Something moves in them, slowly, till the debasement is all thrown out. Some time, the very tarnish shall be taken off.”

Hope was Hope Devine still ; she could still “ see.”

CHAPTER XLV.

TO-DAY.

It was a year and a half after this, that our little girl was born.

In the full, bright summer-tide.

I had the pain and the peace again. But the pain was a joy.

All pain is gain, I said ;

God,—he hath helped me.

There were rhythm and rhyme measuring and uttering themselves in my heart, and this was the refrain they came to.

And the peace was like the peace of heaven.

One beautiful night, with the little daughter at my side, in the stillness.

Then there came a day of fear ; to show us how great our joy was.

We almost lost her : she almost went back into heaven.

Nurse Cryke sat with her on her lap in the window. Richard was by my bed.

“Mr. Hathaway ! Look here !”

What a strange voice she spoke in ! I shall never forget how it sounded.

I was up on my arm with the instant impulse.

“Mis’ Hathaway ! You lay right down !” And she thrust out her elbow at me ; then lifting it, she beckoned Richard nearer.

I saw her point to the baby’s face. She whispered ; but I heard what she said.

“Blue spazzum ! Get me some brandy !”

“Nurse !” I cried. “Tell me what it is. I can’t be quiet unless you do.”

"Well, it aint much, I guess ; only it oughter to be seen to. A kind of a ketch in her breath, or her cirkleation, or something. You keep still, or less we shall have you to look after."

Richard came back with the brandy. He mixed a few drops in water, as Mrs. Cryke told him, and she gave it to the child.

"It's fetched back the color a little. I guess she'll do. But I tell you I was scared ! I didn't know—I don't know certain yet—but what—"

She whispered again, and again my sharpened senses caught it.

"She might be a *blue baby*. And they don't *live*."

"Mrs. Cryke, I hear every word. I should hear you *think* now. You must tell me every single thing. Richard, come here. Is she really better?"

"She looks better. The doctor is coming, now. Don't be frightened, Nansie. That would be worst of all, for all of us."

"No. I won't be frightened. I will keep just as still ! Only, you must tell me everything. I always know things, Richard. I shall know worse than you do, if you let me alone."

"I've no doubt of that, you bad little woman," said Richard. But he was pale, too. The good Richard ! Oh, I knew God would not take back his little daughter from him, now !

The doctor looked grave. He could not tell, he said. These were obscure things ; it was what we could not touch ; we could only be very careful, and wait.

The brandy was right, he told Nurse Cryke. It might have saved her life. Some stimulus, to give nature a start. Nature had the thing to do, if it were done.

And then presently, he sat down and told Richard how it was. I would not let them go away into another room. I would hear it all.

It was a little valve, between two parts of the heart, that ought to close, perfectly, at birth. Sometimes it did not, at

once. Sometimes it never did. And *that* was a "blue baby."

Nothing we could reach.

O little heart! Just begun to play! Play rightly; fill perfectly with dear life! What should we do, Richard and I, if the little valve would not shut? If the tiny, awful mechanism failed, and stopped!

"Hold her so," said the doctor. "Do not change her position. Do not let her be turned upon her side. Watch her; and if the paleness comes, give her the brandy."

He put a pillow in the nurse's lap and she rested the baby upon it.

We kept her on that pillow all the day; all the night. When bedtime came, Richard made Mrs. Cryke go to rest. She put the pillow on the bed beside me. I asked to have it. I told them I should not sleep if they took her away, where I could not see,—could not know. I *would* sleep, if they would let me have her.

Richard sat beside the bed all night.

I slept because I had promised; because I knew I must. But every time I waked, there was the little face, pale, but life-like, on the pillow, and there was Richard, with his eyes always on the little face.

"She breathes better," we said to each other.

"She sleeps quietly."

"Her lips are not so white."

"Her nails are not so blue."

"I can't help hoping," said Richard, softly. "But—Nansie! don't *you* go to hoping!"

And then I would shut my eyes to please him; saying nothing.

Every time, the lips had a faint trace of better color. Every time, the little face looked somewhat pinker. Every time, I found Richard bending over to see these things, or to lift the corner of the little blanket, gently, on which rested the atom of a hand.

"It isn't much, yet; it don't amount to very much; don't *you* count upon it, Nansie; but yet—I can't help hoping."

It was broad daylight when I roused wholly, after a long, sweet nap, into which I fell with Richard's words repeating themselves, soothingly, in my brain.

"I can't help — I can't help — hoping!"

He sat there just as he had sat all night.

The dear little bit of a face, warm with sleep, was almost rosy. There was no blueness around the mouth, nor under the little, tender nails. We looked up, together, from it.

"I don't hardly dare to say it, Nansie; and *you* mustn't believe it, till the doctor comes. But — that valve's shut!"

I suppose it was. I suppose the wonderful mystery, beyond our ken and handling, had perfected its own office; that the little beat and count were established that should be the pulse of a human life.

For it has beat on, and we still have our child.

"It was so strange," we said, after our breath came freely, and the days went by. "All hung upon a little, trembling membrane, out of our reach, that might draw close, or that might not. How little we know about the valves,—any of them!"

"Yes," said Nurse Cryke, jerking up both elbows at once as she finished the baby's toilette with a little pin in the laced robe-front, and drew all smoothly down. "But the beauty of that is, that we haven't got to do with the *valves*. All we've got to do is to go ahead and *breathe*."

I thought how all my life I had been feeling for the valves.

"What shall we call her?" Richard asked of me.

"Why, there is only one name! We christened her all that night. Hope. What a little Hope it was, when you kept telling me I shouldn't!"

"And yet," I said again, "it won't be Hope Devine, after all. There never was such a true name as that."

"This is true, too, and cheery. It tells the rest of it. Hope Hath a way!"

One thing happened, a few weeks after, that I can never think of without a great throb of humble love, and a great

shudder also, at the weight of punishment it showed me might have been.

Richard sat in our room, holding little Hope in his arms.

Nurse Cryke had gone, and I was busy at some drawers, putting away and changing things, and making cosey, comfortable arrangements for settling down to the sole care of my little child.

It was curious and touching to see Richard hold that tender little thing in his great, strong arms, and lift it against his broad, sheltering bosom. She rested there like a little wind-flower born against a hill-side.

He looked in the tiny face as if the fair, innocent eyes and the dawning smile told years full of blessed stories to him for the time to come.

Suddenly he reached her out to me.

"For the dear heaven's sake! Anstiss, take the child! I've got something that I must attend to before I'm an hour older! Don't wait tea for me. I'm going in to New Oxford, to see John Proctor. He'll be married and off to-morrow!"

Five minutes after, he went out of the yard, on horseback. I could hear Swallow's feet strike into their swiftest trot as he went down the hill.

After that he could not help answering my questions when he came home. I don't know whether he might have done it, if he had not startled me so, and left me in such an astonishment.

"I wanted to get this," he told me, taking out a folded paper from his breast-pocket, long and legal-looking.

He had come into the little tea-room, and Martha had just put the tray on the table for him, and gone out again into the kitchen.

"I've torn the signature off, and now it must go into the fire.—I made my will, Nansie, four years ago. That is all. When we hadn't any little Hope, you know."

Yes, I knew. I knew that the word was true with a significance that he did not purposely put into it.

I reached my hand out, and took it from him. I would see this will of Richard's, before he burned it. I would see what

thought had been in his heart four years ago ; when he hadn't any, little hope !

He let me have it, though I think it had hardly been his meaning.

I took it to the window, to read it by the waning light, while he drank his tea.

I read a new page in his great, generous, silent life.

I saw where, in a fresh point, his manhood touched, as I had demanded that manhood should, the Nature Divine ; the Nature that can care for the unthankful and the evil ; the loving, giving, and forgiving God.

I sat there still, in the gathering dusk. My tears fell down, hot, upon the unfolded paper.

Richard turned round, presently, wondering. Then he got up and came over to me.

"Why, Nansie !" he said. "Little wifie !"

"O Richard !" I sobbed, with my hands in his, and my head bowed down upon them. "If this had come to me then,—two years ago,—I should have gone away, like Judas, and hanged myself."

All those are old times, now ; to Hope, and little Hope, and Richard, and me. We talk them over, some of them, when we are together.

Little Hope is fifteen now.

Hope Upfold lives at South Side. Her husband built a house there, near the Copes. The neighborhood is wider now, and rich with cultured and friendly life. Hope's life has widened, also, to its privilege and power. It is large and beautiful.

She has three glorious boys, and a fair little daughter, Anstiss.

Grandon Cope has never married.

He is the true, strong, outgiving friend of us all.

I said that people who would tell of to-day should wait until it had become yesterday. They may do better. They may wait till the yesterdays, in their turn, have become to-

day. For that is what they do. That is what they are made for, and the process of them. All God's yesterdays make up his grand To-day. When the soul wakes to the light of his meaning for it, its morning has begun.

I thank him that I see mine high already over the horizon.

For now, I am up the hill ; and the top is a green table-land ; like the grand, beautiful reaches that lie beyond the edges of wild, precipitous western bluffs, toward the sunset ; a long, fertile joy.

And, beyond the sunset, are the Hills of God.



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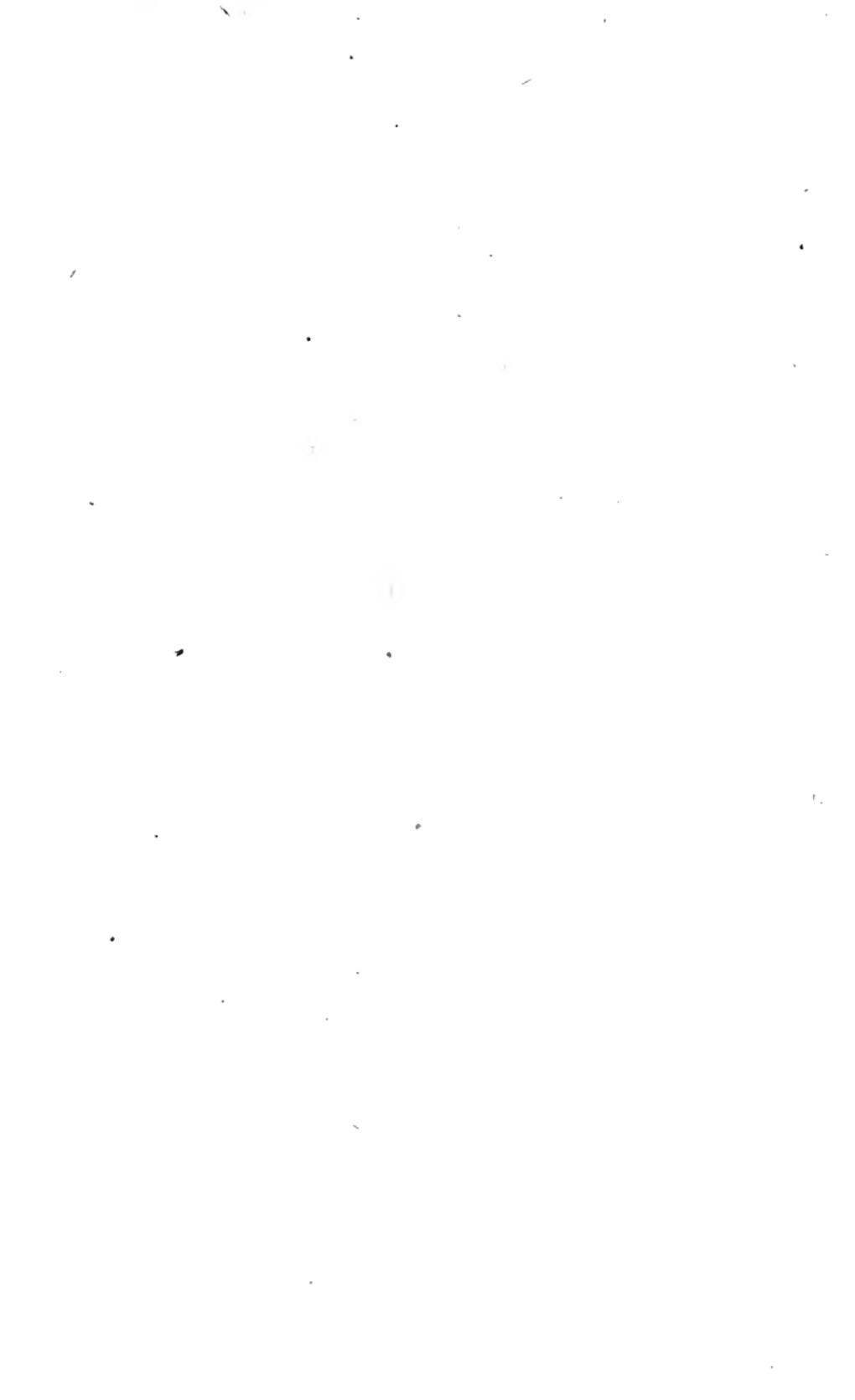
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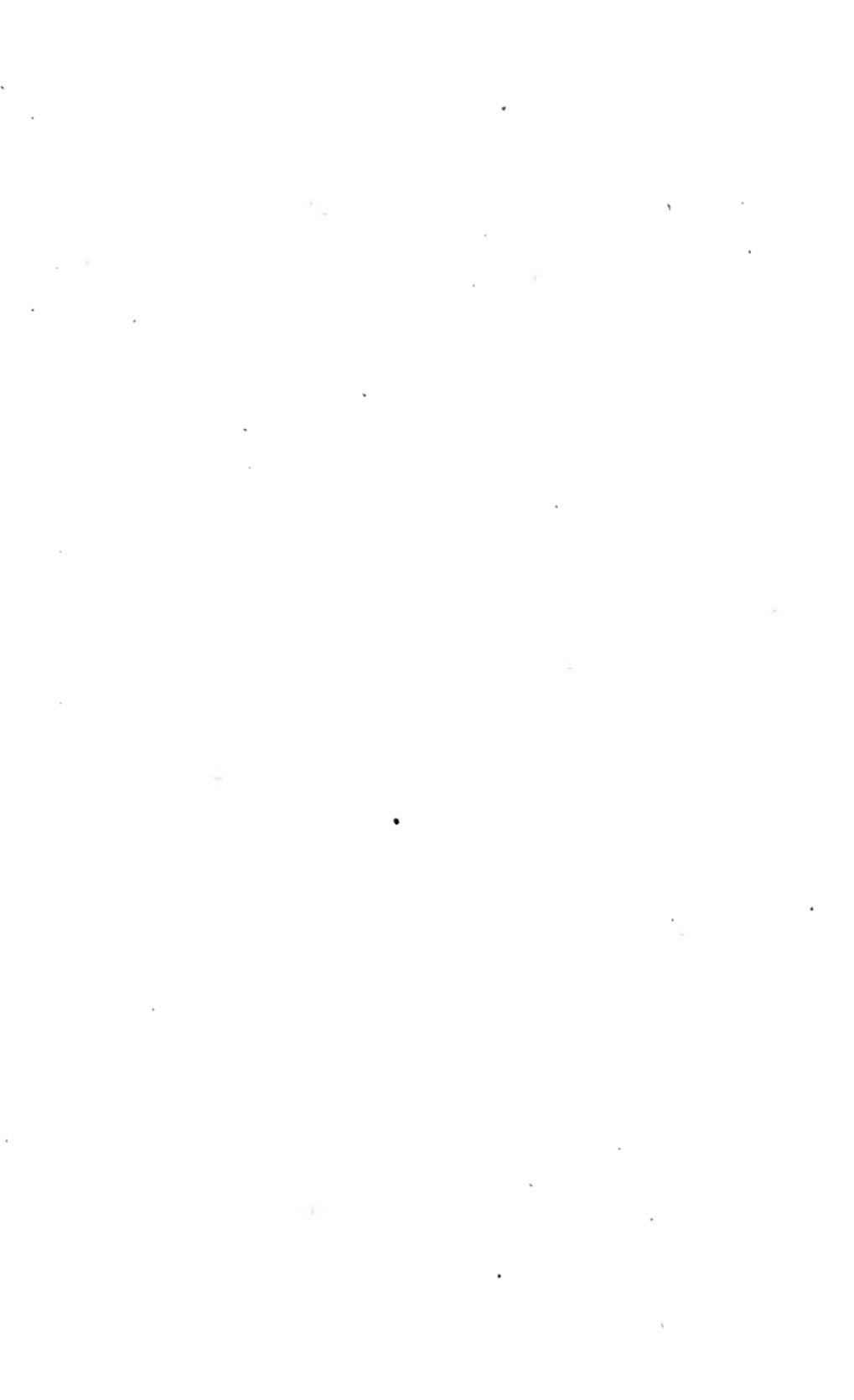
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